

THE PRUSSIAN HATH SAID  
IN HIS HEART—

Cecil Chesterton

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THE PRUSSIAN  
HATH SAID IN HIS HEART—



# THE PRUSSIAN HATH SAID IN HIS HEART—

BY

CECIL CHESTERTON

LONDON  
CHAPMAN AND HALL, LTD.

1914

**91.3284**

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY  
RICHARD CLAY & SONS, LIMITED,  
BRUNSWICK ST., STAMFORD ST., S.E.,  
AND BUNGAY, SUFFOLK.

TO  
MY BROTHER  
GILBERT KEITH CHESTERTON  
IN MEMORY OF  
MANY ARGUMENTS  
AND AN  
ALLIANCE



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# THE PRUSSIAN HATH SAID IN HIS HEART—

## INTRODUCTION

IT is the principal object of this book to present a certain view, which the author holds to be the true view, of the war in which this country is now engaged, to show that war in a certain perspective, as, I think, history will see it. For that purpose it is necessary to bring into sharp relief the factor which made war inevitable. That factor was, according to the view here taken, the political and military power of Prussia, the character of the Prussian monarchy, and the spirit of those who as representing Prussian ideas directed the policy of the German Empire. Prussia as it existed before the war, was incompatible with a civilized and Christian Europe. Sooner or later the one had to be crushed, if the other were

not to be destroyed or (what would be worse) corrupted. That is my thesis.

To that thesis there is a very practical corollary; and it is for the sake of that corollary that I have written this book at this time.

If the thesis were merely theoretic and historical it might be well to suspend its demonstration until the war itself had become a matter of history, and it could be reviewed, perhaps more impartially, certainly with a greater wealth of material. But the question is not merely theoretic : it concerns urgent matters of public policy.

So long, of course, as the issue is doubtful, the main object of us all must be simply to make sure of winning, but at any time now a succession of victories gained by the Allies over the two Germanic Empires may bring the question of the settlement which is to follow into the immediate sphere of discussion. In another chapter of this book I draw attention to the powerful forces which are now working secretly, and may soon be working openly, in favour of a premature peace, such as would sacrifice the fruits of victory, and leave Europe still under the menace which has been its night-

mare for forty years. Here I will only point out that the question of the terms on which peace may safely and satisfactorily be made must depend upon the view we take of the causes of the war and the character of the enemy.

It has been loosely and rather sentimentally said that we are not engaged in a war against the German people. That statement contains a truth and a falsehood.

It is quite true that the varied peoples inhabiting the German Empire did not make this war, and would not, if left to their own tastes and traditions, have made it. It is true that these peoples have already suffered greatly from the supremacy of Prussia, and would ultimately suffer more than any other Europeans by a victory which would make Prussia all-powerful. It is true that they will, in the same sense, be gainers by the victory of the Allies.

At the same time it is a very insufficient theory which would attribute the war solely to the wickedness or madness of an individual man or even of a group of men. Projects for sending the present German Emperor to

St. Helena on the strength of a ludicrous comparison with Napoleon (with whom William II has about as much in common as with St. Francis of Assisi) will not meet the case. I do not mean that Europe should not inflict fitting punishment on the man or men directly and officially responsible for the war and its conduct. I hold strongly that it should. But I do mean that you will get the whole picture wrong if you see merely the wicked Kaiser as its central figure. To take an analogy, if in a certain town there is a quite extraordinary prevalence of crime you will not get to the bottom of the problem by merely repeating that the crimes were committed by criminals, and that the criminals are responsible and ought to be punished. Of course, they are responsible. Of course they ought to be punished. But what you want to know is why the criminals are so numerous and have so free a hand in that particular town. And the repetition of the above truisms, though very necessary if they are disputed, will not help you to find out.

The thing the Allies are really fighting against is a spirit, a tradition, a creed. That

spirit and that creed have always directed the policy of Prussia. They now direct the policy of Germany. In so far as the Emperor represents them, we are at war with the Emperor. In so far as the governing class of Prussia represents them, we are at war with the governing class of Prussia. In so far as the German peoples accept them and are prepared to fight for them, we are at war with the German peoples.

In a word this war is at bottom a religious war. The thing which has defied Europe and has challenged Europe in arms is not a man, or a class, or a nation, or an Empire, but a religion. And it is that religion which Europe, if it is to save itself, must first defeat and then destroy.

To the spirit and creed of which I speak many names have been given. It is sometimes spoken of as “Militarism”; that word is not only inadequate but has been so misused in the past, being continually applied to that reverence for arms which is part of the very stuff of Christendom, and again to those reasonable precautions which a free nation will always take to protect its interests and its

honour that it can only mislead. Besides, the possession of a huge army and the subjection of the civil population by means of that army, though a necessary part of the Prussian system, is not the root of that system. Its root, as is the case with all human creations, will be found in a philosophy.

That philosophy is Atheist. Since the expression may easily be misunderstood, I will at once proceed to explain the sense in which I use it.

In the present confusion there are many to whom the dogmas of religion present certain speculative difficulties which they do not feel able to solve. Some of these call themselves Atheists. But ninety-nine out of every hundred of such men in England, France or America, accept as fully as any Christian the dogmatic assertion of moral responsibility, of the validity of the distinction between right and wrong, of a purely ethical (that is mystical) test to which all human action must be brought. Huxley did so when he said that it were better for mankind to perish than to say “Evil, be thou my good.” Many when arguing against the existence of a God, will appeal to the sense

of justice or of compassion, asking how God could permit this or that wrong to endure or this or that suffering to be inflicted. Such men are in truth appealing to God; for Justice and Mercy are attributes of God, and their claim to unchallengeable authority rests on their being so. The professed Atheist may not perceive this; but for us the fact remains that in bringing all human things to the test of justice, he is really admitting justice to be superhuman and implying a superhuman Judge.

The real Atheist is a man without God; not a man who cannot satisfy himself as to the intellectual proposition that there is a God, but a man for whom God does not exist, for whom there is no Righteous Judge of Creation whose judgments are consciously or unconsciously accepted; for whom the only tests of human action is material success. Such a man may not profess Atheism. He may even personify the material forces of the Universe, of which alone he is conscious and in which alone he believes, and call them “God.” This, one may guess, is what the German Emperor does, and his extraordinary speeches are quite explicable when so interpreted. It is certainly

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what is done by those Prussian theologians who still cling to a profession of Theism and even of what they call “Christianity,” but whose Pantheism is simply the Materialism of Professor Haeckel of Jena turned inside out. These men are none the less Atheist in their fundamental philosophy, and the State which has been inspired by the type of thinking they represent is Atheist in practice and in morals.

The Fool of Holy Scripture, it should be remembered, was he who said, not in Hyde Park but in his heart, that there was no God. That fool has directed the public policy of Prussia for more than a hundred and fifty years. There has often seemed not a little of wisdom in his folly, but as sure as God lives and judges the earth, a Fool he was and a Fool he is to-day.

“I myself have seen the ungodly in great power: and flourishing like a green bay tree. I went by, and lo, he was gone: I sought him, but his place could nowhere be found.”

## CHAPTER I

### THE GREAT DIABOLIST

THE difference between Prussia and the other great nations of Europe can best be understood if we consider her as the masterpiece of a single creative artist. England and France—and, for the matter of that, Russia also—are like those great Christian cathedrals which the Prussian loves to destroy. They are the creation of ages, and every age has left its mark upon their structure. As in such a cathedral you will find Renaissance work superimposed on the Gothic, and behind that the Norman or Romanesque, and perhaps in the foundations the Roman brick, so into the making of England or of France have entered the Roman order and arms, and the gigantic miracle of the Faith, and the energy of the Crusades, and the high civilization of the Middle Ages, and the rediscovery of Antiquity, and the religious wars of Catholic and Protestant, and the

Revolution, and the new flame of intense Nationality, which it kindled in friends and foes. And besides their common inheritance there has gone to the making of each the special work of many great men, remembered still or long forgotten, warriors, saints, law-givers, poets and orators. But Prussia, as we know her, was the work of one man. What she was when he died with all his work accomplished that she is to-day. She has added much to her territory, much to her wealth, much to her military power, but not a penny to her spiritual treasury or an inch to her spiritual stature. Many able men have been in her service since that time, but one man of genius planned her foundations and built her walls, and to this day she bears stamped irrevocably upon her the impress of his powerful and evil mind.

That man was Frederick II, called—and justly called—the Great.

Frederick was born in 1712, the eldest son of Frederick William I, King of Prussia. His father, the collector of gigantic soldiers who were never allowed to fight, was a man whose whole mind and character were coloured by

madness, and perhaps he bequeathed to his son an insane taint which, indeed, broke out more than once in the Hohenzollern dynasty. Anyhow, it is fair to the son to remember that, apart from any question of heredity, his education was calculated to give his temperament a horrible twist. His father entertained for him a hatred which, like all the old lunatic's passions, passed the bounds of reason, so that he was used with a frantic cruelty which on more than one occasion only just stopped short of murder. The young Frederick emerged from a childhood of unspeakable misery able, energetic, capable of enormous industry, keenly interested in philosophy and literature, but with something unnatural and unsound in his mind, or perhaps, rather, in his soul. As his character unfolded this unsoundness developed into something more horrible than his father's wildest dementia. He seemed to hunger and thirst after iniquity as saints hunger and thirst after God.

The wickedness of Frederick is a thing that stands quite by itself, and must not be confused with the crimes which have stained the record of nearly every great warrior and statesman of

history. There has been a tendency of late, especially in Germany, to set up Napoleon as a "Superman," or, as we should say, "Satanist." But in truth such mystical devilries were altogether alien to the lucid Latin brain and, in the main, decent human instincts of the great soldier of the Revolution. Doubtful or indifferent, like nearly all his contemporaries, in the matter of religion, Napoleon took ordinary Christian morals for granted, like other men, though, like other men, he often violated them. When he had been hurried into an unjustifiable act he either expressed his remorse for it or made excuses for it, and his excuses (as in the case of the Duc d'Enghein) had no reference to any "Master Morality," but were the excuses that men ordinarily make for such acts—grave peril, urgent public necessity, moral certitude that he was wronged and the victim guilty.

From Frederick you will hear nothing either of penitence or of self-justification. He delighted in his crimes, loved to taste and exhibit their criminality, to taunt the God he denied with their success. When he hacked a living nation to pieces he did so not doubtfully or reluctantly as did the other two parties to the

crime, but with joy in his heart and hideous jests on his lips. “The Powers,” he said, “might now communicate and partake of the Eucharistic Body of Poland.” Nor does anything in the transaction appear to have pleased him more than the knowledge that he was forcing a good woman to act against her conscience. “I wonder,” he said (and you can hear the horrible chuckle), “how that old woman has settled matters with her confessor?” His own share in the infamous spoil was perhaps less to him than the thought that by making her an accomplice in his sin he was wounding the good heart and outraging the Christian conscience of Maria Theresa. It was as grateful to him as to his Master.

It should not be forgotten either, though the matter need only be glanced at, that in that department of human life which is perhaps, after a man’s religion, the most fundamental and formative, Frederick suffered what is ever the mark of the Diabolist as contrasted with the merely self-indulgent sinner—the mark of perversion.

In the Ages of Faith a simple explanation of Frederick’s character and career would prob-

ably have found general acceptance. It would have been said that he had sold his soul to the Devil. And it may be that such a way of putting it would have been as lucid and satisfactory a statement of the truth as could have been found. For such deliberate choice of evil rather than good seems to have been what the men of the Middle Ages really meant by the sale of the soul, and such worldly success as Frederick undoubtedly achieved was generally considered as its typical reward. But the age in which Frederick was born was very far from being an Age of Faith. It was the age in which belief in the supernatural had sunk to the lowest ebb that it has ever reached since the Conversion of the West.

The immense importance of this fact in its effect upon Frederick's fortunes and on the fate of his life-work will appear presently. At the moment we are concerned with its effect on himself. While Frederick was still a boy the assault upon the Christian faith, made for the most part in perfect sincerity and from honourable motives, by the great French philosophers was producing deadly effect. Frederick, whose early teachers and companions were French-

men, who read, wrote, spoke and thought in French—though in bad French—immediately came under its influence. He was soon the friend and correspondent of Voltaire, the acknowledged chief of the new sect.

But between him and his masters there was a marked distinction. They were, for the most part, Deists. Even those few who denied God respected the fundamental axioms of morals. Indeed, a constant appeal to these axioms was a chief part of their campaign against the Church. Frederick was an Atheist, and though in his youth literary ambition and affectation led him to write a stilted French essay on philanthropy and the duties of rulers in imitation of his favourite models, it soon became apparent that his Atheism did not stop at any merely metaphysical speculation. His strong and lucid mind spanned the whole gulf between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries. It pushed him past the Deism of Voltaire, past the Agnosticism of Huxley. His intellectual courage confronted the final and tremendous question which Huxley faced but did not answer in his last and greatest essay. He boldly and even gladly gave the answer which

Huxley refused to give. He saw that the denial of God meant ultimately the denial of Right. And he welcomed the solution.

Frederick, let it be understood, was perfectly sincere. In minor matters of assumed culture he had abundant affectations. But his Atheism was no affectation. It was a conviction as solid as a rock. And upon that rock he would build his State, and the gates of Heaven should not prevail against it.

But how was a State to be founded on the Denial of Right? To any one who has tried to think out what a State is and why it exists the problem will appear a pretty formidable one; for it is precisely on the Assertion of Right that all States rest their claim to authority. Every Government, whether its form be democratic, oligarchic or despotic, claims the obedience of its subjects on the ground that it represents Justice, as the nation conceives it; that it bears the sword for the punishment of evil-doers and the encouragement of them that do well. And as that claim is the basis of all government, so the national assent to that claim is the basis of all civil obedience. But how is a state whose first principle is the denial of

all Divine and human rights to obtain such obedience?

It is obvious enough that a government which cannot claim to repose on Right without denying its own first principle must, if it is to exist at all, repose on Force; and the doctrine that government is based on Force, a doctrine which no tyrant of older times would ever have ventured to whisper, has from the beginning been part of the Prussian creed and has spread from Prussia even to this country. But, even so, the problem is not solved, for how is the ruler to obtain the force necessary to coerce his subjects into obedience, since he himself cannot be physically stronger than all of them together?

Frederick found the answer in that great instrument which his father had in part created —rather as a mad hobby than for any definite purpose—but which his own genius made the thing it ultimately became, and on which the whole fabric of Prussian rule still rests—the Prussian army.

Frederick knew that a body of men armed, equipped and well disciplined can keep down a much larger body of unarmed and undisci-

plined populace, especially if that populace is not very courageous, lacks initiative and the power of voluntary self-organization, and has no strong and vivid tradition of freedom. For the maintenance of obedience in the army itself —at that time a professional or mercenary force drawn from the poorest part of the population—he relied upon Terror. The cruelty of the punishments inflicted on his soldiers was unexampled even in the eighteenth century, when all military discipline was at its harshest. Sentences of many hundred lashes were freely given, and a military flogging was so horrible a business that soldiers sentenced to undergo it constantly pleaded with evident sincerity to be shot instead. When Frederick was the ally of England he could not venture to allow Englishmen who were anxious to accompany his army to do so, lest they should see by what means Prussian discipline was maintained. In fact, the whole aim of that discipline was, as it is to-day, to make the soldier more frightened of his officer than of any possible adversary.

It need not be denied that there was much in Frederick's administration which has been highly praised, and which to some extent

deserves the praise it has received. But all his statesmanship, good or bad in itself, can be related to his basic political creed. Thus he has been much commended for the freedom he gave to discussion and to the expression of opinion. But it should be remembered that Governments which know their power to rest ultimately upon opinion will always feel nervous and sometimes grow panic-stricken when opinions which threaten their dominion are propagated. Thus the French Monarchy rested upon the belief of most Frenchmen for several centuries that the monarch embodied National Justice, was a kind of sacramental representative of the nation. When this belief was challenged, the French Monarchy was in peril. When it was repudiated by the French people, the French Monarchy fell. Much the same is true to-day of Russia, where, if the mass of Russians really ceased to regard the Tsar as the “Little Father” of his people, the present form of Government would collapse, as it nearly did collapse nine or ten years ago, when confidence in the Autocracy had been for the moment shaken. But Frederick's rule did not rest on opinion or consent;

it rested on his command of the army and the army's command of the nation. So long as that command was unshaken he had nothing to fear from any opinion his subjects might entertain. Nay, the more they debated and wrangled the less likely they were to impede his plans. "My people and I," he said, "have come to an arrangement that suits us both : they are to say what they like and I am to do what I like." That was the sound and far-sighted policy of Frederick, and whenever the Hohenzollerns have departed from it they have done so to their own disadvantage. Only yesterday we saw that the Socialist Party, despite its three million votes, could not deflect by a hair's-breadth the policy of the real masters of the German legions, and therefore of German policy.

It should also be said that Frederick worked hard, and on the whole wisely, to promote the material prosperity of his people; and here again his policy has been followed, more or less according to their wisdom, by all his successors. Of the precise character of the Prussian "social legislation" which since 1870 Europe has so largely imitated I shall have to speak hereafter.

Here I will pause only to note that in this matter, as in others, the main lines of Prussian policy derive from Frederick, and also perhaps to note a curious historical parallel. In one other very remote place there was once erected a State where a régime of terror and a curious perversion of morals were accompaniments of a social system which boasted of having eliminated economic distress. It may seem wild to draw an analogy between a king whose principal vanity was in his emancipation from all the superstitions of religion and an impostor raised to power by one of the most frantic delusions that religious credulity ever inspired. Yet if we study his career closely we shall see that the impostor also had some claims to be considered a great man, and if we disregard non-essentials we shall really find some kinship in the methods and perhaps in the souls of Frederick Hohenzollern and Brigham Young.

Such was the State which Frederick proposed to create, and when he had created it he was resolved to make it, sooner or later, the first Power in Europe. In international affairs it was his belief that the principle upon which it was founded would be a source, not of weak-

ness, but of strength. That he would be free, upon his principles, to strike treacherously, to violate treaties which others would respect, to make wars without provocation, and to seize territories to which he had no claim, would give him a distinct advantage over his antagonists, as a similar theory of morals (though perhaps not as lucidly defined) gives the garroter and the card-sharper an advantage over their victims. There is no doubt that up to a point he was right. In this present war, for instance, the Prussians would never have taken Liége or Namur, never have forced their way almost to the walls of Paris, had it not been for the respect paid by their enemies to rights and promises which they themselves violated without scruple or shame. The "scrap of paper" argument is not original: it dates, like everything else Prussian, from the great Frederick; he also called treaties "pretty filigree work."

Such were the broad outlines of Frederick's policy. Before we describe how far it succeeded it will be well to take note of the material with which he had to work and of the kind of Europe in which the work had to be done.

Such a State as Frederick contemplated

could not possibly have been established in a country with a vivid memory of the Roman order or in one with a tradition of great battles fought for political liberty, least of all in one strongly and determinedly Christian. But in all these matters Frederick was fortunate. No Roman legionary had ever been within many hundred miles of the farthest outpost of old Prussia. Prussia had no political history; nothing but a series of rulers obeyed in turn by a more or less servile population. That population was of mongrel Slavonic stock originally ruled by a small German aristocracy. The Faith reached Prussia far later than it reached Russia or Norway, and never penetrated deep. Chaucer, writing at the end of the fourteenth century, speaks of his knight as having fought “against the heathen in Prussie.” Early in the sixteenth century the work, such as it was, was ruined. The Prussians, at the command of their princes, became Protestant in the lump without any of those fierce religious disputes and appeals to arms which, whether they ended in the victory of the Catholic Church or of its enemies, quickened and refreshed the spirit of other nations. Frederick had therefore little

to fear from his own people in the prosecution of his plans. What had he to fear from Europe?

Here again Frederick's fortune favoured him. In another age such an experiment as his would have been stamped out by a Crusade; but that was not the age of Crusades. The wars of religion had ended long before; indeed, religion itself was all but dead among the rich and powerful, and seemed to be dying even among the populace. National wars and wars for civic freedom were equally out of fashion. The typical wars of that age were dynastic. Two families disputed about some point of precedence or inheritance. Others joined either combatant as allies. The fighting was done by comparatively small professional armies. The issue was decided to the advantage of one family and to the disadvantage of the other. No larger effect was expected; any larger effect would have embarrassed both combatants.

It was in such a moral atmosphere and with such materials at his disposal that Frederick Hohenzollern, king, philosopher and pervert, threw down his challenge to God.

The matter upon which the immediate issue was joined was the right of Maria Theresa to the Hapsburg inheritance. That right was as clear as public law and public treaties could make it. The Pragmatic Sanction by which it was guaranteed had been assented to by every European sovereign, and by none in clearer terms than by Frederick of Prussia. Nevertheless Frederick determined to strike a blow at the Empress, and to strike it treacherously. Without a declaration of war, without the smallest intimation of his intentions, nay, in the midst of renewed assurances of support, he invaded Silesia.

The thing was, of course, simply theft. The Hohenzollerns never had any rights in Silesia that would have borne a moment's examination, and if they had ever had any, they had long ago renounced them, and Frederick himself had expressly and recently confirmed the renunciation. Any one who doubts the unanswerable character of the case against the King of Prussia in this matter had better be referred to the defence. We have Frederick's own account of the matter, and we have the best that can be said for him by one of the greatest

of English—or rather Scotch—men of letters. I quote both from Carlyle's *Life*. Let us hear Frederick first—

“ This Silesia project fulfilled all his [the King's] political views. It was a means of acquiring reputation; of increasing the power of the State; and of terminating what concerned that long-litigated question of the Berg-Julish Succession.”

Frederick then goes on to weigh the dangers against the chances of success, duly noting “weak condition of the Austrian Court, Treasury empty, War Apparatus broken in pieces, *inexperienced young Princess to defend a disputed succession of those terms*” (nothing could make the man and all he stood for more horribly vivid than this sentence), the chances of an alliance with either France or England, and the death of the Czarina as removing Russia from the list of probable enemies. “ Add to these reasons, an Army ready for acting; Funds, Supplies all found and perhaps the desire of making oneself a name, all this was cause of the War which the King now entered upon.”

That is Frederick's confession. It has a

startlingly topical ring. Now let us see what Carlyle has to say for him—

“As to the justice of his Silesian Claims or even to his own belief about their justice Frederick affords not the least light which can be new to readers here. He speaks when business requires it of ‘those known rights’ of his and with the air of a man who expects to be believed on his word (!); but it is cursorily, and in the business way only—a man, you would say, considerably indifferent to our belief on that head; his eye on the practical merely. ‘Just Rights’? What are rights, never so just which you cannot make valid? The world is full of such. If you have rights and can assert them into facts do it; this is worth doing.”

In other words, what matters is not whether Frederick was trying to burgle his neighbour’s house or pick his neighbour’s pocket, but whether he could do it successfully and keep the swag. One wonders how Carlyle would have liked that argument if used against him by a swindling publisher!

The new Atheist creed was now to be seen fully in being and in action. The first betrayal was by no means the last. For the purpose of his unjust and faithless aggression he had

leagued himself with Bavaria and with France. The instant his own share of the spoil was secure, he broke faith with his allies and retired from the contest. In 1744 Frederick again attacked Austria without provocation, and in the following year he again abandoned his allies without shame. His successive treacheries prospered exceedingly. When at last peace was signed at Aix-la-Chapelle he was the only gainer. He obtained Silesia and an immense increase in the military prestige of his kingdom. It can hardly be said that any other Power obtained anything.

And then, when the full success of the new creed was revealed, a curious thing happened. Something which all men seemed to have forgotten, something the existence of which Frederick especially denied, that thing which men had once called Christendom, which they might now call the Common Conscience of Europe, stirred in its sleep. Within less than ten years of the Treaty of Aix a coalition had been formed against the armed champion of injustice which in a faint and half-remembered fashion recalled those great coalitions which had waged war under the walls of Acre, at

Lepanto and along the Danube. For it was a coalition whose object, though but half conscious, was to destroy and expel from Europe something alien to her soul, something which, if she did not destroy, must sooner or later destroy her.

The crusade failed. For that failure many reasons might be suggested. The military genius of Frederick was one important factor : the excellence of the great army he had trained so carefully—an army still strictly professional, yet containing a far larger percentage of those who owned his rule than did any other army of that age—was another. But the most fundamental reason was, perhaps, that Europe, though angered and outraged by his insolent and successful treason, was not, as it had once been, one in spirit and tradition. It had no one solid certainty to which to rally. Its rulers, long accustomed to wage merely dynastic wars, were undecided, and their motives were mixed. England, somewhat isolated from Europe and ruled since the Revolution by a close and very national oligarchy, was ready to become Frederick's ally that she might aid in depressing the House of Bourbon. The throne of France

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was occupied by a man who was, indeed, by no means the utterly base and contemptible person that he has sometimes been painted, but on whose soul had settled a sort of despair, partly, perhaps, the nemesis of excessive self-indulgence, partly the effect upon a very clear intelligence of the contemplation of the irreparable decline of his house and what might well appear to him the decline of his country. The Empress of Russia was a woman of loose character moved to anger at least as much by Frederick's private gibes as by his public crimes. In Maria Theresa alone, it may be, was there something of the real spirit and creed of Don John of Austria or Richard Cœur de Lion.

Anyhow, as the seven years of war approached their end, ally after ally slackened and fell off from the confederacy. When peace came Frederick still held Silesia. Injustice, flagrant and unashamed, was confirmed. Atheism, young, vigorous, accoutred, confident in its material strength and in its negative certitudes, had challenged a hesitating, an unprepared, a doubtful Christendom to arms. And Atheism had won.

## CHAPTER II

### THE WARS OF ANTI-CHRIST

THE remaining twenty years of Frederick's life were years of all but unbroken peace. Of this peace it is enough to say that, to the Christian conscience, it was more detestable than the worst of his wars.

At the close of the Seven Years' War Frederick came to one conclusion of immense moment to the future of Prussia and of Europe. He came to the conclusion that there was one Power on the Continent which was too strong for him ever to crush, and which he must, therefore, conciliate; for it was of the essence of his philosophy to break the weak and conciliate the strong. The policy which he deliberately adopted towards that power and towards the dynasty that ruled it became a fixed tradition in his family, was pursued unswervingly down to the dismissal of Bismarck, and was never really abandoned until within a year

or so of the present date. That power was Russia.

It was Frederick's desire to connect himself closely with Russia. He determined to safeguard that connection by a dreadful pledge, to confirm it by a horrible sacrament—the murder of a nation. The two powers were to be bound together by partaking together of what Frederick, with a characteristic sort of pleasantry, had called "the Eucharistic Body" of a third.

The partition of Poland was Frederick's work and bears the emphatic impress of his mind and will. Russia was a more or less willing and Austria a most reluctant accomplice; neither would have dared to suggest such a crime unprompted. The crime, the most easily accomplished and the most apparently successful of his crimes, has brought its due punishment on his descendants. The hatred borne by the Poles to their conquerors—but especially to the most guilty of their conquerors, the Prussians—has been fruitful of evil to his House, and it may be that even now it is Poland that the Hohenzollern dynasty will find its grave.

In 1786 Frederick died (God help him!)

and went to his account. Far fitter to him than to poor Louis XV would have been the words of his chief eulogist : “Enough for us that he did fall asleep; that curtained in thick night, under what keeping we ask not, he at least will never, through unending ages, insult the face of the sun any more.” In 1792 his successor, with the help of the Tsar and the Austrian Emperor, carried through a new and more ruthless partition of Poland, such as he had always recommended. But, before this, far away in Paris something had changed whose changing was to change the world.

The policy pursued by Prussia throughout the Revolutionary Wars is worthy of careful attention. It is a distinctly humiliating chapter in her history, but too characteristic to be passed over.

In those wars the sympathies of the present writer are necessarily with France, and with that creed of human equality, that demand for the ending of privilege for which France stood. But there were high enthusiasms and great loyalties on both sides. Among those French exiles who gathered at Coblenz there were many who fought not for their own

privileges, but for that great Monarchy which had been for so many centuries the banner and beacon of France. Passion for an insulted and persecuted Faith was the very soul of the desperate rising of the western peasantry. And so with foreign enemies of the Republic. A chivalrous compassion for a fallen family played its part. To many, too, the dethronement of the Bourbons seemed a simple denial of established right, the beginning of mere anarchy. And, later, as the struggle developed, other and yet nobler elements entered into the opposition to the victorious French advance. The Spaniards fought fiercely through years of humiliation that they might remain Spanish and not French, and something of the same impulse showed itself later and more sluggishly, as was consonant with the less military spirit of the people, among the Germans. In England the war became a thoroughly national thing; the name which was its symbol was not Pitt, but Nelson. A tenacious and mystical Religion informed the invulnerable Russian resistance against which the French at last broke themselves.

But in none of these enthusiasms, any more

than in the hunger for freedom which inspired the Revolution itself, had Prussia any share. In all these great storms in which the souls of nations were dashed together or apart, her rulers, faithful to the Frederician tradition, saw only troubled waters in which to fish. But in truth, as they speedily found, such mighty tides were ill-suited for such fishing.

The first intervention of Prussia in the matter was her adhesion to the Declaration of Pillnitz in August 1791. By that declaration the rulers of Prussia and Austria bound themselves to use their combined power for the support of the French Monarchy against the Revolution. It is the real starting-point of the Revolutionary Wars, though war did not actually break out till nearly a year later.

The action of the Hapsburgs needs no explanation. The Queen of France was of their family, and had for more than a year been secretly soliciting the aid of foreign arms. The King, after holding out for some time, had at last consented to her treason. Pillnitz, so far as Austria was concerned, was the friendly response of the family of Marie Antoinette to her entreaties, strengthened, no doubt, by a

certain dread felt by the Hapsburg dynasty lest the example of France should spread to its own subjects.

It was otherwise with Prussia. The fate of Marie Antoinette, the fate of the French royal family, were nothing to the Hohenzollerns. As I have pointed out, Frederick William had less reason to fear popular insurrection in his own country than any other sovereign in Europe, though an instinct may have warned the King of Prussia that a system such as his uncle had established must always find it more or less to its advantage to support tyranny against the assertion of popular rights; and certainly the ready lending of such support wherever it can be lent without the sacrifice of any material advantage, has been one of the most consistent traditions of the Hohenzollerns. It may, however, be reasonably presumed that the main motive of Prussia in moving in the matter was the same as the motive of her previous wars and acts of aggression, the hope of material gain.

France was weak. That alone was a good Prussian reason for attacking her. Her armies were disorganized and largely worthless. Her executive was betraying the national cause.

If that executive was overthrown (as it was soon to be overthrown) there seemed nothing capable of taking its place. Of that power of recovery by a corporate and spontaneous act of the national will which the French, above all European peoples, possess, and which was to give them, in so miraculous a fashion, a new Government and a new Army able at last to conquer Europe, the Prussians were the last people to have any inkling.

To make an armed assault on a neighbour who happened to be at the moment in difficulties was a proceeding thoroughly in harmony with the Frederician tradition. As for the clause in their joint declaration whereby the allied sovereigns (the Emperor probably meaning what he said) renounced all personal aims and all thought of territorial annexations, the King of Prussia and his advisers doubtless regarded it as what the great Frederick had called “pretty filigree work,” and what the present German Chancellor calls “a scrap of paper.” Had Prussia had her way in this or any other moment of the long struggle France would, one may pretty safely say, have shared the fate of Poland.

The Declaration of Pillnitz was followed, after many months of hesitation, by a joint invasion of France by the Austrian and Prussian armies under the command of the Duke of Brunswick and the King of Prussia. They had every reason to anticipate a speedy success. The first line of the French resistance on the frontier collapsed, as had been anticipated. Then, very unexpectedly, came the check at Valmy and the retreat.

With the wonderful epic of the French resistance I am not here concerned. I am only concerned with the attitude of Prussia towards it; and that attitude becomes at this point exceedingly interesting. In January 1793 King Louis died by the hand of the executioner. In the spring of the same year the Revolutionary Tribunal was set up and the first Committee of the Public Safety chosen. Before the summer was over the Girondins had fallen and that ruthless, but very necessary, military dictatorship which we call the "Terror," was finally established. All this shocked Europe, shocked many good men who had at an earlier date been zealous for liberty. England, Spain and several smaller powers

joined the Coalition against the Republic. But, as the anger of the honest enemies of the Revolution grows and spreads, it is very noticeable that the eagerness of Prussia, who with Austria had inaugurated the crusade, perceptibly wanes.

The conquest of France was not, then, to be so easy a job, after all. There was to be no parade to Paris, no “military execution” of that city (so dear to the Prussian heart) as Brunswick had promised. On the contrary, there was to be formidable and ever-growing resistance, a resistance that was soon to become a vigorous offensive. In October 1793 (it was the same week that Marie Antoinette perished) the French achieved their first real and decisive victory over the Austrians in Wattignies. Another victory follows at Fleurus in January 1794. By July 1794 Prussia had abandoned her allies and withdrawn from the contest.

The hope of partitioning France was over for the moment. But Prussia was not without compensations elsewhere. In 1795 she added yet another slice of Poland to her territory.

The theft was as easy as it was tempting, for Poland, or what was left of it, had no means

of resisting. It was a different thing when the Prussian rulers turning again found themselves confronted with Napoleon.

In dealing with Napoleon, Prussia showed unusual caution. She saw his armies overrun Western Germany; she was angry and terribly afraid, but she offered no resistance. Then she tried to bargain. Might she have Hanover as the price of her neutrality? Napoleon temporized; he knew she was treacherous, but he was at the moment bent on crushing more determined antagonists. Then bribes were offered from the other side: an armed alliance with Austria and Russia, subsidies from England. Frederick William almost made up his mind to join the second Coalition. His envoy approached Napoleon with a threatening letter—practically a declaration of war—in his pocket. But while he was waiting for an audience, Napoleon was annihilating the Austrian and Russian armies at Austerlitz; and a friendly epistle conveying to the conqueror the congratulations of the King of Prussia and offering him an honourable and permanent alliance was hastily substituted. So matters went on. The Prussian statesmen alternately

fawned on Napoleon and stabbed at him in the dark. At last he resolved to be rid of them. At Jena the great army which was the very framework of Prussia was broken in pieces.

Prussia, her Crown reduced to vassalage and her Army limited by the veto of her conqueror, counted for nothing, until Napoleon blundered into the invasion of Russia, the failure of which made possible the last European combination against him. To that combination Prussia gave her adherence, and when France was invaded in 1814 her troops distinguished themselves by the peculiarly abominable character of the outrages by which they avenged the humiliation of Jena on helpless non-combatants. Torture was freely resorted to. The full story of these abominations may be read in the pages of Houssaye. In the judgment of that very accurate historian the Prussians behaved, if anything, rather worse than the Cossacks—then an irregular and more or less barbaric force of auxiliaries, whose outbreaks of savagery were doubtless spontaneous. It is probable that the Prussian atrocities, like those recently committed in

Belgium and France, were deliberate and organized. Indeed, a generation before, Frederick had treated Saxony in much the same fashion.

At Vienna Prussia made some attempt to revive her favourite project for partitioning France, but her more honest allies refused, and insisted that the restored Bourbons should receive their inheritance intact. Frederick William, however, obtained a considerable accession of territory in Germany itself, including the wealthy and strategically invaluable Rhine provinces.

Nevertheless the epoch of the Revolutionary Wars was not an epoch suited to the full development of Prussian policy. It was a time of great passions and high ideals clashing with each other. It had the smell of the morning, and great men with something of the simplicity of children were its chief figures. In such an age a power whose first principle was a cynical materialism and whose aims were purely predatory, might pick up a province here and there in the confusion. But it was in constant danger of being struck down by the great blows that were being exchanged over its head.

It was the settled unbelief of eighteenth-century Europe that had made possible the raids of Frederick and the establishment of Prussian power. The Frederician tradition could hardly succeed so solidly again until the fires of the Revolution had died out and the world was again weary of high hopes.

Many doubtless thought that those fires had been trodden out in 1815; but they were wrong. The Revolution was conquered too late. The armies of the Empire had carried with them everywhere the thoughts that remade Europe. Nothing could ever be the same again, and it was not long before the artificial structure set up by the diplomatists of the old world at Vienna began to crack and crumble. Much of that structure still remains; it will, perhaps, be part of the ultimate task of the present war to clear away what is left of it. But it did not endure even for twenty years in the solid peace which the Holy Alliance hoped to make perpetual. Humanity struggled perpetually against it. Perhaps the most desperate of its struggles was that which we associate with the year 1848. It is of special importance in connection with the subject of this book because

its failure (in the main) makes the starting-point from which once more we see Prussia emerging as a great military power intent on brigandage at the expense of its neighbours.

In 1848, by one of those instinctive movements which are native to her and prove her to be really one, all Europe stirred. In France the attempt to erect a "Constitutional Monarchy" on the English model—a thing wholly unnatural—was destroyed by popular insurrection. Its overthrow was the signal for an explosion all over Europe. Italy rose and Hungary, and there was a ferment in the Germanies. For the first and last time in their history even the Prussians moved.

As a whole the movement failed. In France, indeed, the Bourbons fell and, after a few years of unstable equilibrium, an overwhelming expression of the national will demanded that popular dictatorship to which the French have so continually recurred and will probably recur again. In Italy the King of Sardinia, standing forth in alliance with the Pope as the champion of the national cause, was defeated, and the hold of the Hapsburgs on the northern provinces for the time confirmed. In Poland

and in Hungary insurrectionary movements were crushed by a combination of the rulers of Russia, Austria and Prussia. In England the last rally of the Chartists collapsed on Kennington Common.

The Prussian struggle is of interest from the point of view of this book mainly in so far as it brings for the first time into prominence the man who was to revive “the Frederician tradition” as an active factor in European politics —Prince Otto von Bismarck.

Prince Bismarck is interesting in more ways than one. His character and career serve to show how deep the tradition of the great Frederick had sunk into the Prussian mind. Bismarck was not, like Frederick, a man whose whole soul was possessed of evil. He was neither an Atheist nor a pervert. He seems to have held sincerely to the vague Lutheranism of his upbringing, and he was beyond question a most affectionate and faithful husband. The contrast between his private and his public character can be accounted for only on the assumption that he accepted without question the doctrine that public affairs were outside the sphere of morals. Those who think this

incredible cannot have realized how violently a false religion can warp those moral instincts which are the voice of God in the soul. As men, not without their own moral standard, will nevertheless consent under pressure of an evil creed to abominations such as human sacrifice or cannibalism in earlier times, or in our own time to "eugenics," and even to such filthiness as the denial of Christmas beer to paupers, so Bismarck, no diabolist like Frederick, but a politician inheriting a certain policy, could be simply blind to the idea of moral responsibility as applied to international relations.

In 1848 it was his foresight and decision which largely helped to save the Prussian Monarchy from annihilation by the revolutionary movement; and, when his defensive methods had succeeded, he emerged as an adviser, and later as the principal adviser, of the Prussian Crown.

Frederick William IV, who was King of Prussia during the revolutionary movement of 1848, was a sovereign whose mind was from the first menaced and finally overwhelmed by that insanity which has continually attacked the

Hohenzollern dynasty. In 1857 he was compelled to abdicate the functions of ruler to his brother. In 1861 he died, and this same brother succeeded him as King under the title of William I.

William I was, on the whole, the best of the Hohenzollerns. From the beginning of the Danish trouble, when he would keep repeating the incontestable but (as it seemed to Bismarck) wholly irrelevant remark : “I have no right to Holstein,” to the day of his final triumph when his personal intervention forbade the Prussians to hang the Mayor of Versailles, he was always annoying or embarrassing his great counsellor by exhibiting inconvenient symptoms of a sense of honour. Yet it was in his reign that some of the worst violences, piracies and frauds of Prussia were committed.

That fact is not without interest since it illustrates in another aspect the fixed character of the Prussian State. It was a monarchy, and virtually an autocratic monarchy, but not really a personal monarchy. The will of the individual king counted for almost as little as the will of the people. The Thing that governed and still governs Prussia was a tradition. The

real autocrat of Prussia had a signal advantage over all the other tyrants of the earth. He was dead.

Of the policy of Bismarck we have a very full, and, on the whole, a fairly reliable, account from his own pen. In the ordinary way one would not certainly go to a criminal for the truth about his crimes. But the very curious psychology of Bismarck enables us to trust him in the main as to facts. On the one hand he was a man who, other things being equal, preferred telling the truth to lying, and, on the other, the enormous gap in his conscience, where politics were concerned, made it possible for him to confess without a thought of apology to actions of which a West Indian buccaneer would have been slightly ashamed. He will sometimes distort facts and argue speciously to cover his errors of judgment; but hardly ever to cover his violations of morals. The very words had, in such a connection, no meaning for him.

The principal aim of Bismarck's policy—or, to speak more exactly, of the traditional policy which Bismarck inherited and carried forward with such marked success—was the imposition

on all Germany of the Prussian yoke. Germany first, and then, perhaps, Europe, was to be remade in the image of that Atheist State which the great Frederick had imagined and within the limits of his own Kingdom achieved.

To suppose that Bismarck was seeking merely the national unity of Germany is entirely to misunderstand the man and his policy. Unity, if that were all, could have been achieved in 1848, when the Frankfort Convention demanded it and was even ready to place the Federal Crown on the head of the King of Prussia if he would receive it at their hands. The offer was refused. Not unity but domination was what Prussia was seeking, and domination, even with a Hohenzollern on the Imperial Throne, would at that date have met with active resistance and failed. It required long years of tortuous diplomacy and three carefully engineered wars to prepare the ground for it and make it possible. Bismarck sometimes used for public purposes the cant of German Nationalism, but you will find nothing but the chilliest contempt for it and its professors in his private reminiscences.

One of the first problems with which  
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Bismarck was faced with a legacy left behind to his people's undoing by the worst of Frederick's crimes—the partition of Poland. The ever-living agony of the nation that was murdered, yet could not and cannot die, was again producing disturbances dangerous to the partitioning Powers and to all Europe. The Tsar was weary of his part in the evil inheritance, and of all the woes it had brought him and his people. The wiser Russian statesmen were for a policy of conciliation, and Alexander II, a reformer, the liberator of the serfs, was disposed to listen to them. Bismarck himself tells us that "feeling in St. Petersburg remained for a good while undecided, being dominated in about equal measure by absolutist principles and Polish sympathies." Meanwhile Austria, France and England were urging the Tsar to grant the Poles a Constitution with liberty for their religion and their language. It was Prussia that threw her whole weight into the other scale and ultimately determined the issue.

Bismarck makes no attempt to disguise either the fact or the motives that prompted it. He writes—

“The conflict of opinion was very lively in St. Petersburg when I left that capital in April 1862, and it so continued throughout my first year of office. I took charge of the Foreign Office under the impression that the insurrection which had broken out on January 1, 1863, brought up the question not only of the interests of our eastern provinces but also the wider one whether the Russian Cabinet was dominated by Polish or Anti-Polish proclivities, by an effort after Russo-Polish fraternization in the Anti-German Pan-Slavish interest, or by one for mutual reliance between Russia and Prussia.”

In the end Bismarck got his way. A military convention was entered into between the two Governments. The Tsar promised not to give a Constitution to Poland, and the King of Prussia guaranteed the help of the Prussian troops in the task of suppressing the Polish insurgents. In the face of this armed menace the Powers which had been pressing for a generous policy found it necessary to retreat. The cause of Poland, both at Warsaw and Posen, was lost.

The situation, together with the part played by Prussia in regard to it, reproduced itself very nearly in 1905; and there is a special reason for recalling it to-day. There are those

in this country who are disposed to be sceptical about the sincerity of the Tsar's promise of freedom to a united Poland. The attitude is not unintelligible in the light of many things that have happened in the past, but those who adopt it ought to weigh well the very significant fact that their doubts are not shared by those Polish Nationalists who have spent their whole lives in resisting the Russian Government and protesting against Russian rule. They are the last people in the world who are likely to be sentimentally credulous about the deeds and words of their life-long opponents; yet they are one and all enthusiastic for the war, and look upon it as a war of certain liberation for their country. The explanation is, of course, that the Poles know the history of the trouble as the English generally do not. They know that Russian opinion, even Russian official opinion, has always been strongly divided on the Polish question, that there has always been in the highest places, in the palace itself, an active and influential Pro-Polish party which has more than once nearly got its way; they also know that the steady and relentless influence which has ever thwarted such hopes has been

the determined opposition of the ruling house of Prussia, the original instigators of the dismemberment and ever since the untiring supporters of the oppression of Poland. And they know that the war which has broken Prussian influence in Russia for ever, and has already given a native name to the Russian capital, must inevitably have meant the resurrection of Poland, even if no promise of any kind had been given.

In the matter of Poland Prussia intervened as the supporter of an old wrong; but she was soon to show that she had by no means lost her appetite for committing new ones. She was already looking round for some one whom she could easily and profitably rob, and her eye fell on the small and inoffensive kingdom of Denmark.

There is no need to apologize for so stating the case, for it is practically the way in which the chief conspirator himself stated it. In public and in treating with other nations Bismarck might find it convenient to put forward many more or less inconsistent excuses for his policy, pleading now that he was protecting the oppressed German population of

Holstein, whose immemorial rights he subsequently treated as waste paper; now that he was merely carrying out the decision of the German Confederation whose judgment, when almost immediately afterwards given against him, he dismissed with contempt; affecting at one time a concern for the wrongs of the Prince of Augustenberg, whose cause, as soon as it had served its turn, he was to abandon without scruple; and at another a sense of loyalty to his Austrian ally whom, as soon as the alliance had ceased to be profitable, he was to attack without remorse. But at the counsel board such hypocrisies were put aside. Here are his own words—

“The gradations which appeared attainable in the Danish question, every one of them meaning for the duchies an advance to something better than existing conditions, culminated, in my judgment, in the acquisition of the duchies by Prussia, a view which I expressed in a council held immediately after the death of Frederick VII. I reminded the King that every one of his immediate ancestors, not even excepting his brother, had won an increment of territory for the State; Frederick William IV had acquired Hohenzollern and the Jahde district; Frederick William III the Rhine

province; Frederick William II, Poland; Frederick II, Silesia; Frederick William I, old Hither Pomerania; the Great Elector, Farther Pomerania and Magdeburg, Minden, etc.; and I encouraged him to do likewise."

To pick a quarrel with Denmark was not difficult, nor was it difficult to find a cause of quarrel in which Prussia might look for the support of the Germanies as a whole. The King of Denmark was also Duke of Schleswig-Holstein, and as such a member of the German Confederation. The population of one of these duchies was almost wholly, that of the other partly, German. It was the policy of the Danish royal family to incorporate the duchies more and more with their kingdom, a policy to which German feeling was naturally hostile. The long, simmering quarrel which had already produced one short and indecisive war was sharply revived by the death of King Frederick VII. The Danish contention was that the duchies should descend, as a matter of course, with the Danish Crown. The German Powers maintained that the succession had nothing to do with Denmark, and was a matter for the Germanic body. A pretender was brought

forward in the person of the Prince of Augustenberg and backed more or less by all the German States. Meanwhile Bismarck cared little for the Germanic body and nothing at all for the Prince of Augustenberg. His views on the Danish question were simply those of an enlightened burglar. But the Bund and the Prince were alike useful to him at the moment : and he used them both.

To cut a long story short, the result of the intrigues was that the Danes found their country invaded by the united armies of Prussia and Austria.

Matters would probably never have reached that stage, but for the belief prevalent among the Danes—and deliberately encouraged by Bismarck himself—that England and France would in the last resort protect them against the high-handed violence of the Germanic powers. The hope proved unfounded. Palmerston would have liked to have saved Denmark, but in fact he only hastened her ruin. Though at the height of his power and though possessed of a physical vigour, which in view of his age struck men as miraculous, his judgment, as I think those who study the story of his last

Ministry will feel, was not what it had been in 1840, in 1848, and in 1854. He became querulous and a prey to what seem to have been unfounded suspicions, especially in regard to the Emperor Napoleon, whom he had been the first to congratulate on the *coup d'état*. These suspicions had led him, though an old friend to Polish aspirations, to hang back when Napoleon III proposed to meet the armed menace of the Prussian military convention by a counter-menace. Napoleon was angry at what he considered a desertion, and his resentment led him to refuse effective support over the Danish question. And Palmerston would not, or could not, move alone.

Never was political cowardice and faithlessness more justly and severely punished than in the case of the two Powers which, being bound in honour and by treaty to defend Denmark, left her to her fate. Had France and England acted as became them in 1864, there would perhaps have been no Sedan. There would certainly have been no Kiel Canal.

The Danes, deserted and hopelessly outmatched, put up a brave fight, but were, of course, soon crushed. Then it began to dawn

on the various parties concerned, on the Austrian Government, on the States of the German Confederation, as well as on the Prince of Augustenberg, that Prussia having got her troops into the duchies, had no intention whatever of ever taking them out again. Bismarck was not much concerned for the woes of the poor, duped pretender, who, perhaps, did not deserve much sympathy, or for the protests of the Germanic Body, which he always speaks of in his memoirs as a kind of joke. But Austria might be troublesome; so to Austria propositions were made. Thinly veiled, they amounted to this: that Austria should take one duchy and Prussia the other, and that the two should then tell the Prince of Augustenberg and the Germanic Body to go to Hell.

Austria refused this amiable proposal, and insisted on convoking the German Confederation. The Federation instantly and all but unanimously voted Prussia guilty of a breach of faith and an offence against the public law of Germany. Prussia's reply was a sudden and successful attack on her ally.

Austria was unprepared. The preparations of Prussia had been made far in advance and

were perfect. The new breechloading needle-guns would have been enough alone to decide the issue. A brief campaign, culminating in the battle of Sadowa, compelled Austria to sue for peace.

Prussia was now free to have her will with the little German States that had sat in judgment on her, and she had it very thoroughly. Hanover, Hesse-Cassell, Nassau, the free city of Frankfort, and other northern allies of Austria, were deprived of their independence and annexed to Prussia. Saxony only escaped the same fate because the appeal of Austria on her behalf was backed by France. Those States which had not taken sides against Prussia, were reduced to practical vassalage though retaining a technical independence. The Catholic States of the south, Bavaria, Wurtemburg, Baden, had to purchase the integrity of their territory at the cost of accepting Prussian alliance, which was to prove, as it was meant to prove, fatal to the independence and at last, perhaps, to the soul of South Germany. In point of fact Austria's collapse, surrender and abandonment of her allies had delivered all the Germanies into a Prussian

grip. There was hardly any longer an alternative. Every German State must now accept such terms of vassalage as Prussia offered, for it really depended on Prussia whether such a State should be allowed to exist at all.

Thus was the way made clear for a German Empire of a very different kind from that planned some thirty years before at Frankfort —a German Empire in which the Hohenzollerns should not only reign but rule and by means of which, under whatever forms might be necessary to disguise the process, Prussian government should be forcibly imposed on the Germanies. Only one thing was necessary to complete the process : a foreign war in which the Germanies should fight under Prussian leadership and which should afford an excuse for imposing on them the Prussian military system. Bismarck was not likely to be long in supplying such a want. Cause was found for a quarrel with France.

The French diplomatists were themselves not free from blame in the matter. They both underrated the power and misunderstood the temper of the antagonist with whom they had to deal. They thought France far better pre-

pared and Prussia far less well prepared for war than each respectively was. They do not appear to have known that the rest of the German States would be compelled to follow Prussia. Finally, by a fatal miscalculation, they imagined that Prussia wanted peace, whereas, in fact, though the Emperor probably sought for peace honestly, the men who dominated Prussian policy, and especially the greatest of them, were eager for war.

As we now know, the formal dispute over the proposed candidature of a Hohenzollern for the vacant Spanish throne, would never of itself have led to war. The candidature had been withdrawn, and though France was pressing, rather rashly and over-emphatically, for further assurances, there was nothing even remotely approaching a threat of war. There was not a diplomatist in Europe who, after the withdrawal of the candidature of Prince Leopold, did not expect and hope that there would be peace. Bismarck was only a partial exception. He expected and feared that there would be peace.

So bitterly did Bismarck resent the satisfactory turn that events were taking that, as he

himself tells us, he had formed the intention of resigning his office. He did not fulfil this intention, for, when his spirits were at their lowest, fortune brought him an extraordinary opportunity of which few men in history but he would have felt able to take advantage. In order to make impossible the peaceful settlement which he dreaded and deplored, he did a thing unprecedented, I suppose, in all the shifty and dubious records of European diplomacy. He deliberately forged a public document.

Bismarck was staying at Ems; his friends Moltke and Roon were with him. A telegram arrived sent to him by the orders of the King describing the progress of the negotiations with France. Its meaning was plain enough. It explained that the French Ambassador had asked for certain promises which the King had not felt able to give without further consideration, and Bismarck's advice was asked as to whether this incident of the negotiations should be communicated to the Press and to the Prussian envoys at foreign courts. It was added that the King did not, at that stage of the proceedings, propose to have any further personal

interviews with the Ambassador—the implication being, of course, that negotiations would be continued through the ordinary diplomatic channels.

Bismarck took the telegram and with his own hand altered it in such a fashion as to utterly falsify its meaning and to make it appear that the French Ambassador had been dismissed from the Emperor's presence provocatively, if not with insult. Then he published it and sent it to the envoys. That the statement he sent to both was wholly false, and that the document he really received bore an entirely different meaning from that of the document he professed to produce is acknowledged in his own memoirs without the smallest attempt at concealment or apology. Nay, he recalls complacently how delighted Moltke was at the complete change which Bismarck had effected in the sense of the telegram. "Now it has a different ring," remarked that veteran soldier.

The fraud succeeded. The French Ministers saw the telegram published by authority in the Press. They could not know that it was a forgery. They did what Bismarck confessedly meant them to do. They declared war.

## 64 THE PRUSSIAN HATH SAID—

It is unnecessary to say what followed. An amazing absence of foresight on the part of the Emperor and his advisers—though the “Liberals” in the new chamber must bear a share of the responsibility—left the French defences quite insufficient. Even the new artillery to which Prussia had owed her victory over Austria was not adopted. A few weeks decided the war. France, indeed, both behind the walls of Paris and on the Loire, continued for long a heroic and hopeless struggle. But the end was already certain. France was saddled with a monstrous indemnity, which her peasants paid with a readiness astonishing to those who knew nothing of the reserves of a free people. The inhabitants of two of her provinces were forced under an alien yoke made the more galling by the utter incapacity of her conquerors for the work of the government. And for a generation all Europe lay at the feet of the Anti-Christ.

## CHAPTER III

### THE WORSHIP OF THE BEAST

IT is inevitable that the events recorded in the last chapter should raise in the mind a question similar to that which was occasioned by the exploits of Frederick the Great. Granted that the reappearance of Prussia in the rôle of international brigand is explicable by the persistence of the Frederician tradition, why was that brigandage tolerated by Europe? Why were the three protesting Powers not as ready to use armed force for the defence of Polish liberty as Prussia was ready to use that force for its repression? Why did England at the last moment abandon Denmark to her fate? Why did Napoleon III permit, to his own ruin, the steam-rolling of the small German States and the erection of a huge and aggressive military monarchy at his doors? Why did all the Powers allow France to be coerced into accepting the terms dictated by her conqueror?

We have seen that in the eighteenth century the neglect of the European Powers to combine at once against Frederick, and the failure of the combination, when they did attempt it, to achieve its end, may be attributed to the low ebb to which belief in ideals of any kind had fallen in Europe, to the preoccupation of her rulers with dynastic quarrels, and to the weakening and virtual disappearance of the conception of a united Christendom by which nations could be judged. The nineteenth century had seen a resurrection of idealism. Foreign policy was no longer mainly dynastic in its aims. And, though unity was still unachieved, the idea of a common conscience of Europe was, as a fruit of the Revolution and its dogmas, much more familiar to men than in 1740. Yet nineteenth-century Europe did not make against Bismarck even such an effort as eighteenth-century Europe had made against Frederick.

The explanation must be found, I think, mainly (though there were, of course, accidental contributory causes) in the appearance and growing strength, especially in Western Europe, of a certain doctrine and spirit as

remote from the original ideals of the Revolution as it was unchivalrous, and intensely unchristian.

Though this thing began to be recognizable and even recognized very soon after the end of the Napoleonic wars, it was long before a name was found that defined it with any exactitude. A name has of late years been coined for it, a name with which etymologists will quarrel, but which perhaps expresses the idea sufficiently. We call it Pacifism.

I have called this doctrine unchristian, and in almost any country but this the expression would pass as a truism. It is noticeable that in France, for example, though the Revolution was emphatically a military thing, and its noblest aspect the great legend of armed national resistance to an armed Europe, yet the only people whom Pacifism at all infected were those so-called “Radicals” and “Socialists” whose ruling passion was really a hatred of the Christian name. Here, however, where the doctrine took its first and strongest hold, though generally popular with “Freethinkers” of various kinds, it found its main strength in those religious sects which have departed

farthest from the old creed of Christendom. The phrase may, therefore, appear paradoxical, and it will be well to amplify it.

To my mind Pacifism seems merely a sort of allotropic modification of that Atheism which Frederick the Great made the foundation of the Prussian State. Its basis is materialistic, and in all its different forms of expression its ultimate appeal is always to one of two dogmas, both of which are obviously dogmas of Materialism. One is that the sole test of national policy is its tendency to increase material wealth; the other is that of all evils those which men ought most to dread, avoid, and feel a horror of inflicting, are physical pain and death.

I have said that the new creed took its earliest and strongest hold in England; and in each of its main aspects it is more or less summed up in the personality and work of an Englishman of genius: the one a middle-class manufacturer, of extraordinary lucidity of mind and unequalled powers of exposition and persuasion, the other a young member of squirearchy whose incapacity to think is to most of our minds redeemed by a power over the

English language as an instrument of music to which no parallel can be found in the whole history of our literature.

Much as Richard Cobden hated war, it is doubtful if, but for the great war with which the nineteenth century opened, he would ever have become the European power that he undoubtedly was. From that war, after Waterloo, Great Britain emerged, if not the first nation in Europe, at least the nation on whose evidences of power, prosperity and security the eyes of Europe were especially fixed. She enjoyed for many decades something of the prestige which, as we shall see, has belonged to Prussia since 1870. And this fact synchronized with three others. Firstly, the naval predominance which she had enjoyed throughout the war had given her for twenty years a virtual monopoly of oversea trade; secondly, her capital, long ago conveniently concentrated in the hands of a small wealthy class, was being used vigorously for the exploitation both of the mineral resources of the country and of those mechanical inventions which British genius had achieved a generation or so before. Finally, there had arisen in England and Scotland a

succession of great men who laid the foundations of the science of political economy.

Cobden was the child as well as the interpreter of these things. He was perfectly fitted for his task. What he saw he saw clearly, and could expound with admirable lucidity. What he did not see, he simply did not see at all. He could see that it is of the essence of war to destroy wealth, just as he could see that protective tariffs necessarily involve a diminution of wealth. To the national point of view from which both wars and tariffs may in particular cases be justified, even on materialistic grounds, by their ultimate results, he was simply blind. It should be added that he had the strength which is derived from strict consistency, and that he was (what was rare in a politician even then, and would have been a miracle a generation or so later) really incorruptible. His influence on British policy, though indirect—and perhaps the more because it was indirect—was immense.

The other man to whom I have referred, though infinitely inferior to Cobden in logical acumen, is not to be ignored. If we ask how a thousand follies and preposterous doctrines,

from the wickedness of meat-eating to the legitimacy of wife-desertion (which have no more to do with democracy than cannibalism has), got mixed up with the demand for political and social justice, the answer, so far as this country is concerned, will very often prove to be—Shelley. Shelley began life as a crude and dogmatic Atheist; as he grew older his views became more complex, or, as I should be inclined to say, more muddle-headed; but they never, the assurances of pious divines notwithstanding, got any nearer to the historic faith of Christendom. He had a keen sense of pity, which was highly honourable to him, but, since his philosophy remained at root materialist, he was, in striking contrast to the men of the Revolution and to Byron, more shocked at physical suffering than at moral injustice. His marvellous genius as a poet gave imperishable endurance to his rather weak and wandering views; and he became, and still remains, the chief prophet of sentimental Pacifism, just as Cobden provided an intellectual basis for rationalistic Pacifism.

It may seem at first sight that I am dwelling too long on matters apparently irrevelant to

my subject. It is, however, the very purpose of this book to show the triumph of Prussia as the triumph of a certain creed; and in order to explain that triumph it is important to note that it was never plainly confronted with its true contrary, held equally confidently and equally ready to appeal to arms. The true opposite of the denial of right (which was the fundamental dogma of Prussia) was the assertion of right—if necessary, by force and at any cost of life and suffering. But the doctrine which was more and more identified with “Liberalism” in Western Europe was not the assertion of right, but its non-assertion. Philosophically it was founded on the same first principle as was the Prussian doctrine, and consequently in practice it was its ally and accomplice. For it is obvious that if there are two men, one of whom is always telling a brigand that he is a strong man and has a right to anything he can grasp and hold, while another is always telling victims of the brigand that it is wrong to resist brigandage or that it is much more profitable in the long run to avoid it by paying blackmail, then, however different the opinions of these men may seem to be, it

is, as I say, obvious that the effect which their action tends to produce is the same effect, namely, the profit and aggrandizement of the brigand.

Palmerston and Louis Napoleon, though certainly neither of them Pacifists, had to allow for an element of Pacifism in the public opinion on which they relied, had always to reckon with it, often to compromise with it, sometimes to yield to it. It was the boast of Cobden and his school that they prevented active intervention on behalf of Denmark, and the unprepared state in which the war of 1870 found the French defences was partly due to the fear which the Emperor had begun to feel of the Pacifist element which had already made its appearance in the new Chamber.

If this was the case even before 1870, it was, of course, far more so after that date. The hold of Pacifism on the most obvious possible rivals of the new German Empire grew steadily greater. As the British Government tended more and more to become a pure plutocracy supported by secret money payments, the Pacifist influence gained strength; for many of the Pacifists, both of the sentimental and of

the calculating type, were immensely rich. The enormous increase in the power of cosmopolitan finance told in the same direction, for the denationalized men who ruled the money market, though often favourable to small wars of aggression against the weak, dreaded the disturbance which a great war between equal European Powers would cause. In France the extreme Republican party, which immediately after 1870 had been especially the champion of militant patriotism, became infected, through its secret anti-Christian societies and its alliance with the Jews, with the new doctrine, and that doctrine seemed almost dominant politically until the first shot fired in the Vosges blew it away like smoke.

Meanwhile Prussia and its political theory could now confront the world from the vantage-ground of complete and unchallengeable success. Even Frederick the Great had been in no such position of acknowledged superiority; for the peace which closed the Seven Years' War, though it gave Prussia a legal title to her stolen booty, had been of the nature of a compromise. Neither side was crushed or left prostrate. Now, however, Prussia could claim

that she had laid her principal rivals in the dust and established for herself a permanent dominion. Her victory over Austria virtually made all Germans her subjects. Her victory over France made all Europe believe her invincible in war, and therefore a proper object of universal imitation. It may be well to take two points separately before considering their combined effect.

The Germans are a European people whose peculiarities for good and evil are pretty well known to those who have tried to analyse the complex which we call Europe. They are a people rather kindly and rather dreamy. They are not natural warriors like the French, or natural adventurers like the English. They have little taste and little aptitude for self-government, or for those fierce political conflicts out of which alone self-government can come. They are fond of speculative thought, of musing freely on the mystery of things, but lack the sharp edge and decision of the Latin mind, which demands as the end of thought a final conclusion and a dogma. They specially love and can create music. They are grave, sentimental, and somewhat deficient in humour.

Such are the Germans. Of such certainly is not the German Empire. The German Empire is Prussian, or, to speak perhaps more correctly, Frederician. It is an enlargement for which the original design of the Kingdom of Prussia supplied the working model. Not until it is destroyed will the Germans again be able to make their contribution—an admittedly valuable contribution—to European civilization.

Theoretically the German Empire is federal, and the King of Prussia merely happens also to be German Emperor. In fact, the governing machine of Prussia dominates the whole of the Germanies, and the means by which this domination is secured are essentially the same as those which served to maintain the original Prussian monarchy. The chief instrument in each case has been the army.

The army of the German Empire is not, of course, of quite the same type as that which Frederick commanded. It is not a professional, but a conscript, army; and in the ordinary way it would be much more difficult to make of a conscript army an instrument fitted for the complete control and subjugation

of a people than if the army constitutes a special class in the State.

In Germany, however, the thing has been done, and the more carefully the present military system of the empire is examined, the more we shall see that that system is elaborately devised to secure the great masses of armed men which modern warfare requires without sacrificing that quality of absolute and terrorized subservience which the Prussian ideal even more urgently demands.

Firstly, it is not true of the German Empire, as it is of the French Republic, that every man is a trained soldier. The troops who have been subjected to the severe and even savage discipline which the Prussian military system demanded, and who constitute the real effective army of the Empire, are drawn for practical purposes entirely from the labouring class, and mainly from the rural labouring class. In all other classes exemptions were always numerous. Those of the wealthier classes who did not get off their service altogether were allowed to serve in volunteer corps under merely formal restrictions, living as they chose and only bound to put in a certain number of

drills. It was the Prussian theory—we have seen it in action during this war—that such practically untrained men could be made into effective soldiers during the progress of a campaign if brigaded with a sufficient number of thoroughly disciplined troops. Moreover, the size of the German population made it possible for the German commanders, without prejudice to the political principle upon which this arrangement was based, to put into the first line as many effectives as France could provide after forcing every able-bodied citizen into the ranks.

The army so formed was officered by men drawn exclusively from the ruling class, still mainly aristocratic, though containing a pluto-cratic element. Promotion from the ranks was unknown. The officer was always a man of a certain station who had adopted a military career as a profession. The all-important non-commissioned officers, the sergeants, were also professional, though, of course, men of another class. It was their special business to insure the discipline and break the spirit of successive drafts of conscripts.

For the essential character of Prussian dis-

ciplinary methods was in no way changed by the transition from a professional to a conscript army. Terror was still the single weapon used to enforce obedience, and it was and is still found an effective one. Of its reaction on the efficiency of the German soldier I shall speak later. Here I only wish to emphasize the fact that the principles upon which the German armies were and are governed are still the same as the principles upon which Frederick the Great relied when the army of Prussia first became formidable to Europe.

An army so governed was evidently a most effective defence not only against foreign but against domestic enemies. With such an army at its absolute disposal the Prussian Government had certainly the less cause to care what the theory of the Constitution might be. In theory, as I have said, Prussia was only one State of the Empire, whose King happened to be its titular head. In practice the Prussian ruling class ruled the army, and the army ruled the Empire. That class had as little cause to fear the Reichstag as Frederick II had to fear libellers and malcontents. The iron discipline of the army and the naturally unwarlike

character of the German peoples was sufficient security. The army alone could act, and the army would always act as the King of Prussia directed. "They can say what they like, but I can do what I like."

So much for the first cause of the successful Prussian hegemony, which mainly affected Germany. The second also had a great effect on the smaller German States, but its effect on Europe as a whole was hardly less.

When one examines impartially the military victories of Prussia between 1860 and 1870, one does not see that there was anything so very extraordinary to boast about. Prussia, in alliance with Austria and with the backing of all the minor German States, had succeeded in breaking the little kingdom of Denmark. That, certainly, was no great achievement. Subsequently Prussia had defeated Austria. In that campaign Prussia had certainly shown that she was far better prepared for war than her rival. But the task was no very difficult one, and proved more against the military efficiency of Austria than for the military prowess of Prussia. What affected the public imagination was undoubtedly the defeat of

France, and the defeat of France had undoubtedly about it a certain dramatic quality. But if any one will compare it with some of the historic wars of Christendom—with some of the victories of France, for instance, from the days of Louis XIV to those of Napoleon—it will not seem so enormous a thing. The fortune of war went against the French, and Paris was taken. Well, the French in their time have taken nearly every capital in Europe, from Moscow to Madrid, not excepting Berlin. What was there about the German triumph which so peculiarly and so much to its hurt impressed the mind of Europe?

I think that the answer may be found in a temperamental peculiarity perhaps native to the Germans which their Prussian rulers have assiduously encouraged—the trick of self-praise. Even before their victory, and still more after it, the Germans were taught to regard themselves demonstrably superior to all their neighbours. They believed it, and sooner or later their neighbours came to believe it also. This was specially the case in this country.

In this country, indeed, the ground had already been prepared for the acceptance of

such a belief. Long before 1870 we had contrived a method by which in flattering the Germans we could also flatter ourselves. The Germans were our "cousins"; they were fellow "Teutons." If, therefore, they were such fine fellows, there was a presumption that we were fine fellows too. All history was ransacked and distorted to support this view of our relationship. The usual form which such distortion took here was the laying of an extravagant emphasis on the most obscure and largely legendary part of our history, on those dark and anarchic centuries when, as we conjecture, a certain (probably small) number of North Sea pirates and revolted German mercenaries achieved a measure of political power and perhaps a certain infusion of new blood in the deserted province of Britain. Nay, it actually became a part of English patriotism to prefer this dingy and unattractive origin for our nation to the grandeur of a highly civilized part of the Roman Empire. The trick was worked by a curious circular argument. If you doubted our exclusively "Anglo-Saxon" origin you were asked how you dared to deny that the great, handsome, valorous, freedom-loving,

woman-worshipping Anglo-Saxons were our ancestors. If you replied that you saw no particular reason to believe that the Anglo-Saxons were any more great, handsome, valorous and the rest than their neighbours, and proceeded to point out that the Roman legionaries from whom many of us may well be descended had a certain reputation for valuable military qualities, you were asked how you dared to suggest that our noble Anglo-Saxon ancestors were inferior to mere foreigners. Carlyle, a man of genius, instinctively hostile to the Latin spirit, and full of an honourable enthusiasm for German literature, lent the powerful aid of his vivid pen. As Charlemagne had become Karl der Grosse (his descent from a noble patrician house of Narbonne being tactfully passed over), so such an obvious Frenchman as William of Falaise became, on the strength of the one thirty-second part of Scandinavian blood which he may perhaps have inherited, “the Crowned Northman.”

How far all this was due to pseudo-science and a crude interpretation of philology, how far to the political alliance of England and Germany against the Revolution and Napo-

leon, how far to a religious sympathy between the English and the North Germans as the two principal peoples who had, though at a different time and for different reasons, rejected the Catholic Church, it would be difficult to say. But it is certain that before 1870 Teutonism was predominant in this country. The war of 1870 confirmed its dominance, for therein the legend so dear to Carlyle and Kingsley of the triumphant Teuton and the vanquished Latin was enacted under our own eyes. Of course, it was a mere coincidence. The Germans won, not because they were Teutons, but because at that particular time they happened to have a better general, a better military organization, and, above all, better artillery. But the coincidence was too marked not to make a profound impression on those already predisposed to find Teutons efficient and Latins decadent. That impression became an all but universal dogma, and even survived the change of foreign policy which made us the allies of the French and the antagonists of the German Empire. Nay, that change was largely recommended to us on the ground that it would be heartless to leave the poor French, who, being Latins, were doomed

to defeat, to confront unaided the gigantic power of Germany. It lasted down to the very moment of war, and I cannot better illustrate its character than by taking a book written just before the outbreak of that war, and published after the author's death only the other day.

It is called *Germany and England*, and consists of lectures delivered by the late Professor J. A. Cramb, reprinted from his notes. It is described on the cover as "A Reply to Bernhardi," but this sub-title seems singularly inappropriate, and I cannot but doubt whether Professor Cramb would have accepted it as a fair description of his work. So far from being a reply to Bernhardi, the book seems to me to be a whole-hearted welcome to Bernhardi, an enthusiastic endorsement of Bernhardi, an embracing of Bernhardi's beautiful big boots. All the silly nonsense that Bernhardi talks, whenever he is dealing with matters outside the immediate scope of his profession, is here reverently reproduced and humbly accepted as a proper guide for the future development of European civilization.

Professor Cramb, as his introductory chapter

tells us, set before himself the true purpose of every writer on contemporary history ; nor could I improve on the words in which he defined it. “What, then, is my purpose?” he asked. “I answer in the words of a German historian, ‘To see things as in very deed they are.’” His theory was excellent ; his practice, I think, open to criticism.

Recent events have enabled us to see both Germany and Europe “as in very deed they are” more clearly than was formerly possible. We can safely say, for example, that the German Empire, at the time when Professor Cramb was writing, possessed in reserve a very large and powerful army, smaller than that of Russia, but somewhat larger than that of France—though it had not, like France, given every able-bodied male a real training in arms ; that this army was perfectly equipped and prepared, so far as mechanical means could prepare it, for the aggressive war which the Prussian Government had long meditated ; that it was admirably disciplined so that its members could be relied upon to carry out systematically any commands given to them—even to the extent of actions so repugnant to the traditional

military spirit as the killing of women and small children; that, on the other hand, these troops suffered from some serious disadvantages, as for example, that they lacked the power of personal initiative, that they could not be induced to attack in other than close formation, that their individual marksmanship was bad, and that they were not able to confront anything like an equal number of French or English soldiers in hand-to-hand fighting with the bayonet; that Germany had a siege artillery more powerful than any in Europe, which was excellently served, and a considerable superiority in machine guns, while its field artillery was inferior to that of France both in quality and handling. Apart from military matters, it might be said that a carefully and patriotically devised fiscal system had assisted the German Empire to a great industrial development, not, however, without some loss to vital interests, a peasant population having in many parts been converted into an urban proletariat. It might quite safely be added that Prussia (and Germany, so far as it was Prussianized) had lost such power of thinking as it ever possessed, and had become altogether incapable of litera-

ture and of the plastic arts. In these departments it had little to offer but a choice between vulgar pomposity and equally vulgar and generally somewhat perverted pornography.

That is a fair statement of the truth about Prussianized Germany "as indeed it is." Now listen to the late Professor Cramb—

"And here let me say with regard to Germany that of all England's enemies she is by far the greatest; and by 'greatness' I mean not merely magnitude, nor her millions of soldiers, her millions of inhabitants; I mean grandeur of soul. She is the greatest and most heroic enemy—if she is *our* enemy—that England, in the thousand years of her history, has ever confronted. In the sixteenth century we made war upon Spain and the Empire of Spain. But Germany in the twentieth century is a greater power, greater in conception, in all that makes for human dignity, than was the Spain of Charles V and Philip II. In the seventeenth century we fought against Holland; but the Germany of Bismarck and the Kaiser is greater than the Holland of De Witt. In the eighteenth century we fought against France; and, again, the Germany of to-day is a higher, more august power than France under Louis XIV."

Well, sixteenth-century Spain discovered

America. She conquered with a handful of men all the southern part of that hemisphere. She accomplished a miracle which had not been attempted since the Roman Empire, and which has perhaps never been successfully attempted again; she welded a whole continent of barbaric tribes into the civilization of Europe so effectively that that civilization even survived her own downfall. She also produced the pictures of Velasquez and Murillo, the plays of Lopez and Calderon, the great satire of Cervantes.

The France of Louis XIV was not only the greatest power in Europe in arms and diplomacy, but incomparably the greatest in letters. She could boast of the whole cycle of classical dramatists, of the comedies of Molière, of the philosophy of Descartes, of the theology of Bossuet and Pascal. The ruling class of Europe everywhere learnt her language, her code of manners and her literary tradition. And Professor Cramb says that the present German Empire surpasses both, not only in military resources, but in "grandeur of soul." She has produced the 17-inch Krupp howitzer, the materialist mythology of Professor Haeckel,

the biblical fancies of Professor Harnack, the public buildings of Berlin, several statues of Bismarck and the Kaiser, and a large output of pornographic picture post-cards.

Now, if you ask why Professor Cramb thought of the German Empire in so extravagant a fashion, why he thought the Germans such heroic fellows, I think that a careful examination of his book will prove that it was mainly because the Germans said so, and the Professor thought that they ought to know. At least, that is pretty well all the evidence he adduces. But he was not alone in his conviction. All England, and to a great extent all Europe, lay for nearly half a century under the spell of a sort of hypnotism, the joint effect of Prussian victories and Prussian self-glorification.

Before we consider, as we shall have to consider in the next chapter, the effect of this on the Germans themselves, it may be well to summarize its effect upon Europe. It led to the general acceptance of certain doctrines which Prussia had originated, and which in the conquests of Prussia seemed to triumph. They may be set out fairly succinctly.

(1) *Political Materialism*.—That all matters of politics, and especially all matters of war, are matters of calculation. That personal valour counts for nothing. That the sense of personal freedom and initiative counts for nothing. Above all, that the energy created by the sense of fighting in a just cause counts for nothing. That if you tot up the numbers and the quantity and quality of armaments you can prophesy the result with virtual infallibility. It so happened that in 1870 the Prussian calculations and prophecies came out almost exactly right. Hence the wide acceptance of the Prussian theory in this matter.

(2) *Predatory Imperialism*.—This follows from the last thesis. Since war is a matter of calculation, it is foolish for the weak to resist, as it is natural for the strong to encroach. The use of the word “Imperialism” may cause some confusion, since that word has been used in this country sometimes in the Prussian and sometimes in a wholly different sense. Many of us have called ourselves Imperialists, meaning that we wished to make the connection between this country and the commonwealths and dominions which British energy and the

British spirit of adventure have created throughout the world closer and more effective. That has obviously nothing to do with the doctrine stated above, with which, however, our country by no means escaped infection during the long years of Prussian supremacy.

(3) *The Denial of Right*.—This, as we have seen, was the original theory of Frederick the Great, on which the whole policy of Prussia was built. It certainly spread beyond the borders of the German Empire. That strong men might violate ordinary morals without offence, that treaties might be broken and promises repudiated by a nation bent on fulfilling its “Destiny”—these ideas were widely canvassed. Even Bismarck’s forgery found defenders in this country.

(4) *The Efficiency of Servitude*.—By this I mean the theory, held to be more or less justified by the issue of the Franco-Prussian War, that a people is the more effective for military and other purposes in proportion as it is reduced to a condition of unquestioning obedience to the regulations framed by its rulers. In other words, that the way to make a strong nation is to make a servile people. This essen-

tial Prussian conception is one to which I have referred only incidentally in these pages, and which, in view of the extent to which it has permeated the thought of Europe, deserves more careful exposition.

Matthew Arnold, in the most fascinating of all his books, *Friendship's Garland*, notes a contemporary reference to “the complete subordination to the State” of the Prussians of 1870, and puts it forward as the explanation of their victories and a subject for English emulation. Arnold’s object was, of course, to oppose the crude industrial anarchism of the dominant Manchester School, with which he was always, and rightly, at war. But it is not a little curious that he should have fallen blindly into the very materialism—the “boundless faith in machinery”—against which he was always warning others. He could see that “liberty and publicity” might only mean “liberty to make fools of yourselves and publicity to tell all the world that you are doing so.” He could see that the value of self-government depended in part at least on whether the “best self” of men was governing. But he could not apparently see—at least not

at that moment—that whether it was good or bad that men should be completely subordinated to the State depended on what kind of State it was to which they were subordinated.

Now the subordination of the Prussians to the State had nothing in common with the Roman religion of civic patriotism, or the high Republican enthusiasm of 1793 which suffered the Conscription and the Terror that it might save France from the stranger. It was not even of the same type as that loyalty to one sacramental man as embodying the nation which inspired the Cavaliers and Jacobites of England, which made French monarchy, and which still, in spite of a thousand errors and crimes, unites the Russians to their Tsar. It did not mean the fusing of the whole people into a conscious nation. It was purely servile.

It would be absurd to attribute the whole drift of Europe towards the revival of slavery and the influence of Prussia. Mr. Belloc has demonstrated with admirable lucidity in his *Servile State* that it is the inevitable form of stable equilibrium for a society in which the wealth is concentrated in a few hands and the mass of men are proletarian, unless that society

can find within itself the energy necessary for redistribution. But Prussian supremacy undoubtedly helped the movement of all industrial Europe in that direction, firstly, because Prussia was the country in which the Christian tradition was weakest, and consequently the return to the slave-basis of society, which the Faith had destroyed, easiest; secondly, because it was the country in which the new organization of the social system on a servile basis had been pushed nearest completion; and thirdly (and this was what counted for most), because the Prussians could point to the unchallengeable fact of military victory—a victory attributed by themselves and also by many foreign observers to the “discipline,” that is to say the servility, of their social relations.

The consequence was that for forty years or more almost every attempt made in Europe to deal with the problems which we call “social” was made on Prussian lines and tended towards the clear Prussian objective—the divisions of all citizens into two classes, free and unfree. Our own Insurance Act—the biggest step taken towards the Servile State in this country—was avowedly borrowed in its essentials from

Prussia, and the attempt to introduce a similar system in France, after having been passed by the Chamber and blessed by M. Jaurès and the leading Socialists, was defeated only by that popular resistance which the French are always ready to offer to laws that have no sanction from the national will. For many years every person interested in “Social Reform” (which our simpler fathers called “the Oppression of the Poor”) has always been able to secure a hearing for his nasty project by calling it “the Schultsmann System” or the “Guggenheim System,” or by pointing to the bright examples of Jena or Köpenick or Hesse-Darmstadt. And all these projects, even when ostentatiously fathered by professed Socialists, have had two things in common: they have been servile in their ultimate basis and assumption, and they have contained some insult to human dignity, which is the image of God.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE NEMESIS

DANTE, I think, says somewhere of the Souls in Hell that, being cut off from the source of Eternal Reason, they are unable to philosophize. The same is true of Prussians.

A friend of mine once showed me an insane and entertaining book called *Breaks*, which bore this even more entertaining sub-title : “Being the Falsifications of the One Thought of Frater Perdurabo, which Thought is Itself Untrue.” That phrase suggests an excellent summary of what the Prussians call “German Culture.” It consists of Falsifications of the One Thought of Frederick Hohenzollern, which Thought is Itself Untrue.

The one thought of Frederick II was, of course, that there was no God, and that, in consequence, men had no moral responsibility. Now that thought is untrue; but it has another character which deserves notice. It is essen-

tially a destructive and barbaric thought, a thought which makes all further thought unnecessary and impossible, for clearly if there is no meaning in the Universe it is waste of time to inquire what it means, and if men may do just what they choose it is futile to discuss what they ought to do. The thought of Frederick, therefore, permitted of no true development, but only of falsification. The Prussians could rhetorize about it; but they could not *think* about it, for there was nothing to think about.

I put this point first in my attempt to analyse the process by which Prussia approached the suicide which we are now witnessing, because it is the keynote of that process. The Prussians deliberately neglected the soul (in which Frederick the Great did not believe), and consequently in everything connected with the soul their work was simply bad of its kind. Their painting was bad painting, their architecture bad architecture, their music bad music. Especially their thinking was to the eyes of civilized men, bad thinking. Like the Damned, they were cut off from the source of Eternal Reason and could not philosophize.

Palmerston is said to have called Germany “a country of damned professors,” and he was severely rebuked by Arnold and others for this illiberal sentiment. But Palmerston was largely right, as such men are often right about essentials. The Germans are certainly not wiser or more learned or more concentrated on things of the mind than other peoples; but they do seem to regard the mere title of Professor, quite apart from anything the particular man has to teach, with a mysterious veneration. The fame of Prussia’s immense output of professors spread through Germany, and from Germany to all Europe, and especially to this country. The professors, as any one with a reasonable degree of culture and intelligence could see, were fools, but that apparently did not matter.

There was a man called Haeckel. He had attained some legitimate distinction as a careful student of the habits of the lower invertebrates, especially of jelly-fish and sponges. On the strength of this he wrote a number of books in support of a creed of crude and dogmatic Materialism. There was nothing in them that had not been said much more persuasively

by Lucretius nearly two thousand years before. The only part of his work which could be regarded as in any way original was a complicated mythology wholly unconnected with any kind of evidence, including a Pedigree of Man, made up entirely out of his own head and possessing rather less scientific authority than the ancestries of the Homeric gods and heroes. But Haeckel was a Prussian professor, and throughout Germany, and to a great extent throughout Europe, his ridiculous book was accepted as the last word in "Free Thought."

Harnack had even less to offer than Haeckel. He had nothing so definite and intelligible as Materialism to preach. All that he had to say was that he liked some parts of the Gospels and disliked others; and that he was quite sure that Jesus Christ was responsible for the parts he liked but not for the parts he disliked. The parts he liked were, of course, those which could be twisted into a plea for cowardice. The parts he disliked were those which affirmed such inconvenient doctrines as the Being of God, Miracle and a Supernatural Authority by which man could be judged. Harnack was not

without scholarship, but his knowledge of Greek had no relation to his conclusions, which were admittedly based on his conception of the “psychology” of the principal Figure. Whenever our Lord was reported as having spoken or acted otherwise than as a Prussian professor might have been expected to speak or act under the circumstances, he scented an “interpolation.” Professor Harnack has recently been making speeches about England. Any one reading them can form a very representative idea of the sort of evidence and logic upon which he was formerly asked to deny his God.

Then there was Treitschke. Treitschke was a historian. He had only one subject, the magnificence of himself and his fellow Prussians and the inferiority to them of the rest of mankind. Of this historical accuracy one may judge from a sample quoted by Professor Cramb from one of his hysterical diatribes against this country. England, he informs us, has only a mercenary army and has never had a national army, except under Cromwell. Even Englishmen, who are not, as a rule, too well-instructed in history, know that Cromwell’s success was mainly due to the superiority of

his very highly-paid professional army over the old national militia. But Treitschke was also a Professor, and as such received the unbounded homage of Bernhardi in Germany and of Professor Cramb in this country.

Yet the breakdown of German thought which followed on the Prussianization of Germany cannot be illustrated adequately except by seeing it in relation to a man very different from these plitudinous barbarians, a man of wayward, perverse and unbalanced, but unquestionable genius—Friedrich Nietzsche.

Nietzsche was not a Prussian. He was a Pole; but a more or less Prussianized Pole, standing in something of the same relation to the two peoples as, say, Mr. Bernard Shaw stands to the English and the Irish. Such men are usually a little contemptuous of the illusions engendered by patriotism. They have little faith in the aspirations and longings of the nation from which they spring; they have a measureless contempt for the boastful folly of their oppressors. Such a man was Nietzsche. Though he has been acclaimed as the chief prophet of Prussian Immoralism, and even held responsible (by an exaggeration which yet

contains a measure of truth) for the errors and crimes of modern Prussian policy, he hated and despised the Prussians.

It would be interesting to speculate in the case of Nietzsche (as in that of Mr. Shaw) on what he might have become if he had inherited that religion which is the soul of Poland as of Ireland. But he missed that great influence as he largely missed the influence of nationality. He had nothing on which to feed his flaming and towering imagination, except the dregs of Darwinism, which were interpreted by Prussian philosophers as a crude Materialism, and by Prussian moralists and politicians as a justification of egotism and oppression.

I have spoken of this dingy culture as the food of his imagination rather than as the foundation of his creed; for in truth Nietzsche had no creed. You cannot get from him any consecutive philosophy; and you can quote him on almost every side of every question. He could not reason coherently on a Darwinian or any other basis. His most characteristic aphorism: "Nothing is true, everything is permissible," obviously puts an end to all reasoning. He often saw neglected truths, as did

Carlyle, by a flash of instinct apparently unconnected with any process of logic. What is truest in his teaching may perhaps be best expressed in words which are not his, but belong to another great phrase-maker, Robert Louis Stevenson : "This civilization of ours is a dingy, ungentlemanly business, it drops so much out of a man." Though, like Stevenson, an invalid (perhaps because of that misfortune), he had real enthusiasm for heroism and for the great human epic of arms. He had a wonderful wit, a startling gift of vivid and pungent phrase ("Men do not really desire happiness; only Englishmen do that."), and he was an admirable rhetorician. But above all he was a poet, with an imagination which could so vivify and transfigure his material as to produce not a feebly depressing mythology like Haeckel's pedigrees, but a Great Myth, a thing which, however irrational, men could worship —the Superman.

This fancy of a creature to be evolved from Man, which should eclipse Man as Man had eclipsed the lower animals, is not, as I say, a logical deduction from any possible theory of evolution. If Man is to be considered simply

as one of the animals, and we are accordingly to expect him to be supplanted, it is not, on the analogy of the past, probable that he will be supplanted, by his own evolved offspring. Man was not, according to Darwin, the descendant of the Monstrous Eft that was lord of valley and hill, but of some insignificant creature that was hopping about between its toes, and if “Man is a creature that must be surpassed,” it would seem on the same analogy that he is more likely to be exterminated by some preternaturally intelligent toad or by some creature resembling Mr. Wells’ Martians. Nietzsche’s conception was a purely imaginative one. Such as it was, he used it as a fantastic argument for aristocracy. The many must be utterly and ruthlessly sacrificed to the few, because from the few the Superman would be born.

It was the weakness of Nietzsche as a thinker that he could never answer a plain question, and one of the elementary questions he never answered was who these “few,” the potential fathers of the Superman to whom the many were to be sacrificed, *were*. But as it happened, there was one group of men in Europe that had

no difficulty at all in supplying the answer. This was the ruling caste of Prussians. When they discovered Nietzsche, after a long neglect, they were, we may imagine, quite incapable of understanding nine-tenths of what he said. But the part about the New Aristocracy was clear. "He says," we may suppose them saying, "that they are Brave; that they are Beautiful; that they are Incomparably Wise; that they are Ever Victorious. Who can this mean but Us? Are We not Brave and Beautiful and Wise and Victorious? Have We not told each other so for many years? Therefore We are the Master Class and the predestined ancestors of the Superman. And therefore the rest of mankind exist only as means to Our end, as servile material for Us to use."

It must have been maddening for poor Nietzsche to have his Superman identified with the Prussian Junker. It was like asking Mr. Shaw to recognize him in Thomas Broadbent. Perhaps it really drove him mad. Anyhow, he died in an asylum.

And yet, in truth, it was the people who locked Nietzsche up who deserved that fate at least as much as he. For the man who

thinks thus of himself, who sees himself as patently superior to all other men, and who even persuades himself that other men so see him, is mad. He may command armies, he may bring huge guns into the field, his palace may overtop all the palaces of the world. But he is mad. He is suffering from delusions. He is seeing the thing that is not there. For him there is in the long run no crown but the crown of straw with which Peer Gynt was at last crowned Emperor of Himself in the Egyptian madhouse. For him at the last there is no palace save the padded cell.

That the history of Prussia after 1870 was simply the history of a whole nation going slowly and systematically mad was not apparent for many years, but it was not long before one fact appeared—the fact that the Prussian, though he might raid and conquer and annex, could not govern.

To so govern a people of different blood and traditions from your own that they accept your rule, and even come to feel conscious attachment to it, is no easy task, but the thing can be done and has been done. The Romans did it with every people they ruled, except one, and

that one the mysterious race which no Empire has been able to absorb—the Jews. The Spaniards did it in South America. We have done it, at least to an extent, in India. The striking example of its success is Alsace, where scarcely more than two centuries ago—only about a century ago as regards Mulhouse—the French took over the rule of a German-speaking people, and in a few generations made them so passionately loyal to France that their loyalty holds firm to-day after forty years of enforced separation. To no nation that cannot act thus can conquest and Empire bring any permanent advantage.

To the Prussian ruler such action is permanently impossible; he cannot even see why it should be attempted. His own government is based on force and nothing else. By force and nothing else he seeks to impose it on others. If he meets a steady resistance of the popular will which force cannot overcome, then—more force. The consequence is that every foreign population which Prussia seeks to rule is in a state of chronic convulsion and suppressed civil war. All sensible Englishmen regard our mismanagement of Ireland as the worst blot on our

record for statesmanship and humanity. Well, the Prussian possessions are all Irelands, eighteenth-century Irelands, Irelands of the days of the pitch-cap and the Penal Laws. It is not a question of religion or of race. The Lutheran Danes of Schleswig and the German-speaking population of Alsace are as far from being reconciled to their masters as the Catholic Slavs of Posen.

From this Prussian limitation Bismarck himself was far from exempt. When he dealt with foreign affairs he was dealing with something he thoroughly understood. He had a just appreciation of the main factors in the European situation, the military temper of the French, the elements of weakness in the Hapsburg Empire, the immense resources of Russia and her invulnerability to invasion, the naval strength and colonial policy of England. But he had no comprehension of the spiritual forces which build up the soul of a people, and his attempts to defeat such forces by whips, bayonets, espionage and legal chicane landed him in a series of blunders which have already almost undone his own life's work.

He first blundered into a quarrel with the

Catholic Church, then enjoying one of her periodical resurrections of vitality. It is curious to contrast the skill which Bismarck showed in dealing with temporal powers with his utter inability to understand the nature of the power with which he had now to deal. There was in him nothing of that wisdom which made Napoleon say : “ Treat with the Pope as if he were at the head of three hundred thousand soldiers.” He utterly misunderstood the whole situation. He mistook the mutiny of a few negligible professors for a great schism. He thought that the “ Old Catholic ” movement, the utter insignificance and early fizzling out of which only emphasized the unanimous acclamation with which the whole Catholic world greeted the Decree of Infallibility was a thing like the Reformation. He thought that the Catholic bishops and priests of South Germany, whose loyalty to the See of St. Peter was traditional, could be manœuvred into schism by a parliamentary intrigue. The follies and petty persecutions of the Kulturkampf and the Falk Laws nearly split the Empire at its inception. Bismarck only saved it by an abject and ignominious surrender, by

accepting humbly the terms dictated by the ecclesiastical authority. The policy which was to have made an end for ever of the clerical power in Germany resulted in the establishment of clericalism in its least desirable sense more firmly in the Catholic provinces of the Empire than in any other part of Europe. Never since the days of Gregory VII had there been such a Canossa.

Thus, at the cost of bitter personal humiliation, did Bismarck keep Bavaria and the Rhine Provinces. But in Prussian Poland, where there was a national and racial as well as a religious quarrel, the old futile weapons of coercion were refurbished and applied with a new ruthlessness. It was resolved to deprive the Poles of their land, and a “Colonization Committee” was appointed and armed with all sorts of arbitrary and coercive powers with the object of substituting Prussians for Poles throughout the Polish provinces. The conspiracy was met by a counter conspiracy of the type with which Ireland has made us familiar. The Poles, in accordance with Parnell’s famous advice, “kept a firm grip on their farms and homesteads”; and Bismarck’s policy utterly

failed to accomplish its end. The most it did was to scatter a part of the Polish population over the surface of the Prussian Empire, where every Polish family formed a nucleus of disaffection and a source of peril. An attempt to suppress the Polish language, though carried out with infamous cruelty, failed as completely as the attempt to expropriate the Polish peasantry. Prussian Poland remained Polish; and Silesia and West Prussia became more predominantly Polish every year.

What happened in Poland happened with variations in Schleswig, in Alsace and in Lorraine. And in all these conquered provinces the Prussian rule became more abominable and more unsuccessful as the minds of the Prussian ruling class became increasingly subject to that disease or perversion which it is my business in this chapter to attempt to describe.

Of that disease the first and most obvious symptom was that of which I have already spoken. It was illusion. We have seen that the Prussians gained much in prestige by their habit of constant and ritual self-praise, and it is probable that in the beginning this habit was deliberately encouraged by cynical rulers, who

were under no illusion themselves. Nay, even down to the outbreak of the present war, it is probable that the rulers of Prussia, who were necessarily better acquainted with the facts than they allowed their subjects to be, were proportionately less under the influence of mere bounce and swagger than they. Their idea was that this sort of bounce and swagger, if thoroughly impressed on the public mind, strengthens a nation, enabling it at once to speak with greater authority and to act with greater confidence and unity. Nor can it be denied that to an extent these advantages were achieved by the German Empire. But they were achieved at the price of the nation's sanity and ultimately of the sanity of the rulers themselves. As the world and the nature of man are built, you cannot play with truth in that fashion. Self-admiration becomes at last a mere disease of the mind; it takes no account of evidence, even of the evidence of the senses. It makes the sufferer altogether incapable of facing facts or of dealing with men. The infection spreads to the rulers themselves. They are given over to strong delusion that they may believe a lie. The astounding blunders of this

year which have hurried Prussia to her final ruin, represent the vengeance which truth takes upon her enemies, and the just punishment of the cynicism whereby the former generations of Prussian statesmen thought to secure themselves by practising on the credulity of mankind.

Another hurt that her delusion did to Prussia was to snap utterly that subtle but indispensable bond between man and man which we call "honour." I am not thinking only of broken pledges and violated engagements. The ruin of honour involved in the Prussian conception goes much deeper than that. The old European idea of honour, like all the good things which Europe has produced, rests ultimately upon the recognition of the spiritual equality of men. Men as such owe certain things to each other. And the obligations in every case, whether of keeping promises or of fighting duels, are reciprocal. That is honour, and without its strict authority it is impossible either to treat with men or to fight them. In both connections the Prussian has simply forgotten what the thing means.

Take any of the most dubious and debatable

institutions with which the idea of honour has connected itself. Take the duel. When an English gentleman of the eighteenth century said, or a French gentleman of to-day says, that his honour compels him to fight a duel, he means that he owes it to his claim to equal humanity to show that he is not more afraid than his antagonist of being hurt or killed. He does not mean that he owes it to his super-humanity to show that he cannot be hurt or killed; for if he really could not be hurt or killed the whole business would become a disgusting and dastardly murder and would be recognized at once as such by the most dissolute bravo that ever provoked quarrels to show off his courage.

But when the Prussian officer swaggers along Unter den Linden or the Kaiserstrasse elbowing women and civilians off the pavements, he is not provoking quarrels to show his courage; he is provoking quarrels to show what he would perhaps call his supremacy, what I should call his immunity, which is much the same thing as saying his cowardice. Take this historic and well-authenticated case. A Prussian officer insults a young lady at a ball. Her betrothed

very properly strikes him. Thereupon he draws his sabre and cuts his unarmed assailant down. His conduct is promptly approved by a military tribunal. Let it be noted that I am not blaming the man for provoking a fight, but for preventing a fight and substituting a most unmilitary outrage.

It is impossible that a state of mind which makes such things possible should not have its effect on the military spirit of a nation. In all healthy European nations the soldier has ever been specially reverenced, and very rightly so, for he is the sacrificial man, the man set apart to be slain if the need of the nation demands his life. But the German soldier is reverenced not because he is killed, but because he kills—kills any one or anything, unarmed men, wounded men, old men, men with their hands tied behind them, women, children, perhaps cats!

A Prussian officer at Saverne in Alsace, having been, as he alleged, laughed at by an unarmed civilian who was also a cripple, drew a sabre and hacked at him. He also was acquitted by a court-martial. Now these facts themselves might point to no more than a

lamentable loss of self-control on the part of an officer and an ever more lamentable lack of impartiality on the part of other officers. The original outrage might be due only to blind, ungovernable fury. The subsequent acquittal might be due only to blind professional *esprit de corps*. But this officer was not merely acquitted. He was hailed as an heroic soldier by all the militarist papers of the Empire. He was specially saluted by the Crown Prince of Prussia. What wonder that we find the same royal and imperial personage, when military exigencies compel him to occupy a French country house, taking the opportunity to steal the spoons? The one act is about as military as the other.

It should be observed that here again there is nothing specially humanitarian about my criticism. I do not blame the Prussian officer for fighting and killing. I blame him for killing without fighting, for substituting for a fight what he would doubtless call a punishment. Even if the punishment were just, my attitude towards him, and still more towards those who specially signalled him out for admiration and applause, would be much the same. He had,

at the very best, abandoned the most honourable of all professions, that of a soldier, for the basest of all trades, that of an executioner; and his brother officers seem to have thought that it did him credit! It is but a short step to considering the soldier's work less glorious than that of the hangman who (if that be the test) certainly kills with greater certitude and celerity.

In such a fashion does the Prussian creed, the "Master Morality," corrupt the military spirit in the higher branches of its service. In the lower branches the distinctive "Slave Morality," intended for those who are to obey, corrupts it no less. It is of the essence of a soldier that he should obey, obey unhesitatingly, without questioning or after-thought. But it is also of his essence—it is the thing which separates him from the slave and makes the necessary loss of natural liberty a glorious sacrifice—in that he should obey from loyalty and not from fear. Now it is the essence of the Prussian conception of soldiering that fear and fear alone should be the weapon used. The soldier is to be cowed into an unnatural courage, as men very wretched and broken-

spirited will dare even suicide because it seems less terrible than any other alternative. Up to a point the trick will succeed and has succeeded. Your slave-soldiery, lashed in the face, if they fail to salute with sufficient promptitude, will be prodigies of discipline. If sufficiently unintelligent they will even, if they can be kept together, face losses from which the bravest free soldiers would shrink. But even from the purely military point of view you will note disadvantages. Their shooting will not be first-rate, for though you can frighten a man into firing off his gun, you cannot frighten him into shooting straight. They will dislike and avoid hand-to-hand fighting. It will be difficult to get them to advance in other than close formation, for when the individual soldier ceases to be part of your machine his nerve will fail. Personal initiative he will necessarily lack, and, man to man, he will be no match for his antagonist. And, as a matter of fact, all these inferiorities, though partly compensated for by a carefully perfected organization, may be discovered in the German forces as compared with their opponents. Of the loss of honour and of the dignity of the soul I do not

speak, for the Prussian does not recognize it as a drawback. But it counts for something in the long run.

Finally, there is another inevitable consequence of the Prussian creed of egotism and the Prussian denial of morals: they produce perversion. On the most obvious and most unsavoury aspect of this, it is fortunately not necessary to dwell. I note it as I noted it in the case of Frederick II himself. The Eulenberg scandals are not yet forgotten. Doubtless there are such abominations to be found among the rich of all great European cities, but only in Prussia are they the subject of a recognized cultus, supported by a professorial crusade. It is from Berlin that there proceeds that stream of ludicrous and nauseating "scientific" works where unnatural horrors such as are buried under the waters of the Dead Sea, are, as Mr. Bernard Shaw has admirably expressed it, "grotesquely worshipped as the stigmata of genius." If such books occasionally make their appearance in England, they appear somewhat secretly. Their prominence or wide sale would excite universal anger and disgust. It would probably produce riots.

Mr. Edward Carpenter, one of the very few misguided imitators of the German professors in this country (his little book is full of quotations from Ulrichs, Krafft-Ebing, Moll, Hirschfeld and the rest) remarks on the “neglect” of the propaganda here as compared with its popularity in Germany. In Germany, or at any rate in Prussia, professors holding and continuing to hold high public and academic posts, men patronized and honoured by the State, vie with each other in eulogizing and apologizing for the infamy. One of these drivelling degenerates, a certain Dr. Moll, Professor of Psychology at Berlin, who, as I gather from Mr. Edward Carpenter’s book, has received a sort of vote of thanks from the perverts of Berlin—that numerous and presumably influential body—seems to have been selected by the Prussian Government to report upon “the psychology of the Berlin people!”

Such brainless nastiness may, for the purposes of this book, be left out of account. But it is impossible to leave out of account the other kind of perversion—the perversion of cruelty.

Man is so made that you cannot twist his moral instincts without bruising and warping

them, without producing something in the soul analogous to mortification in an injured limb. The Prussian rulers deliberately taught their subjects to disregard obligations, the recognition of which is natural to man. They did more than this: in the case of those of their subjects on whose work their State especially reposed—the members of their armed forces—they inculcated the disregard not only of the normal human conscience, but of those feelings which are the particular spur and impulse of the profession of arms. They taught their officers to disown honour and their soldiers to be afraid. You cannot do a thing like this without producing a perversion and a disease in the soul, and the most characteristic form which that perversion or disease is likely to take is cruelty.

Cruelty, when occasion might require it, was indeed a necessary part of the Prussian system, but it was the whole mistake of the Prussian theory—a part of its fundamental Atheism—that it should have imagined that the thing could stop there, that man could be trained to be cruel when they were told and kind when they were told. The effect was, of course, that

the mere lust of cruelty became a primary passion with the Prussians. It would not be difficult to find illustrations from the conduct of the present war. In the main, as I shall have occasion to point out, the atrocities committed by the German forces in Belgium and France are the result of deliberate policy and are ordered by the highest authorities. But there have been some abominations which could have no relation to any policy military or political. They are due simply to the perversion of cruelty which the Prussian Government has deliberately engendered. And if such cruelty is often, from the purely utilitarian point of view, useless and mischievous when you are fighting foreigners, much more is it so when you are attempting to rule subjects. Yet Posen, Schleswig and Alsace Lorraine will afford innumerable examples of this kind of insanity.

Thus were the vices of Prussia deliberately encouraged by her rulers, weakening her from year to year. And that weakening arose ultimately from the fact that the creed on which Prussia was founded was false. Able as Frederick the Great was, he had miscalculated. His

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system was doomed to fail at last, because the world and the nature of men are not what he thought them; because the instinct which leads the basest to prefer good to evil is a vital one which cannot be eradicated, and the perversion of which is suicide; because, after all, Satan is only Prince not King of this World, because there is a Judge that judgeth the earth.

## CHAPTER V

1914

UP to the dismissal of Bismarck and for many years afterwards there was no sign of a quarrel between Prussia and this country. Bismarck's ambitions were Continental; he desired, for the State which he served, first a supremacy over all German States and then a predominant position in Europe. He never attempted to make the German Empire a naval power, and he had no desire for colonies. When his power in Europe was at its highest he not only refused to use it for the purpose of acquiring such colonies, but deliberately encouraged France to found a colonial empire which he hoped might both weaken her and distract her attention from the lost provinces. On our side, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the foreign policy of Great Britain was mainly directed by the late Lord Salisbury, a man very able and experienced, very patriotic whose chief conviction seems to

have been that England, situated as she was, ought to avoid war at almost any cost. To do so, and yet to preserve national interests intact, he conceived that the wisest policy was to connect England as closely as possible with an Empire which appeared to be the strongest military power in Europe, and which at that time was not a naval or colonial power. This policy, which, among other things, was responsible for the ultimately disastrous cession of Heligoland, might still have appeared wise and prudent if that power had not shortly afterwards begun to develop colonial ambitions of the most arrogant type and to entertain the definite design of challenging British naval supremacy.

In the main this development must be attributed to the megalomania which we have noted in Prussia as the chief result of deliberately encouraged illusion. We in this country feel a natural enthusiasm for our colonies, an enthusiasm which depends less upon the idea that they increase the military strength of England than on the very just feeling that they increase the pride and glory of England. Wanderings in wild places and the establishment of settle-

ments in uncivilized lands are things for which our people have a special aptitude, and we have a right to be proud of the new countries which bear witness to that aptitude, as the Italians have a right to be proud of their painting and the Germans of their music. Also it fitted in well with out historic pride in our naval strength, our conception of ourselves as an island people sweeping the seas and finding strange lands. To Prussia no such considerations applied. Her glory, such as it was, was essentially military and not in any way naval. She was not an island; she was an inland—almost a land-locked—State. Her children had no natural genius for colonization, and certainly they had no natural taste for adventure. They have never dreamed of going to any colony that was not already thoroughly established and settled by somebody else. Nevertheless, a fundamentally stupid desire to prove that there was nothing in which any other people could be superior to Prussians, induced the successors of Bismarck to abandon his policy and to substitute a policy of colonial expansion and naval challenge.

Bismarck was sane. If he had come to the

conclusion that a war with this country was desirable, he would doubtless have engineered it with his customary skill. The course was not very difficult. The old understanding with Russia would have been strengthened in every possible way. Russia would have been promised a free hand in those quarters where her interests did not conflict with those of the German Empire. Opportunity would have been taken to increase and emphasize every possible cause of quarrel—and at the time there were many—between Russia and Great Britain. When the benevolent neutrality of Russia had thus been secured, Bismarck would have bent his mind to the task of making an ally of France. With France also we had our difficulties in those days, and some of them might easily have been so manipulated as to lead to an open breach. Two things only stood in the way of a Franco-German alliance—the memory of 1870 and the lost provinces which were its legacy. But by the time that British and German interests began to conflict the memory of 1870 was already dim; a generation had grown up that had no personal memory of the violation of the national territory. As

to the lost provinces, which, as Bismarck had foreseen, had brought no profit to Germany, they might actually have been used as an asset. Bismarck had been against keeping Metz, in the first instance; had he been in power when an attack on England began to be regarded as the true end of German policy, he might have given it back, perhaps in nominal return for some trifling colonial concession. That would have gone far to placate the French—say, at the time of the Fashoda incident. With a little management the whole Continent might have been ranged against Great Britain, and, when the time for action came, Bismarck might even have contrived so to stage-manage the business that we should appear to be the aggressors. He had done the thing before.

Fortunately for this country those who inherited Bismarck's power and his lack of conscience inherited none of his other qualities. He might ignore morals, but he did not ignore facts. But they were bitten with the new Superman idea, and were conscious of no facts save their own evident superiority to the rest of mankind. They had no idea of a policy save to “hack their way through,” to destroy

nation after nation until Prussia alone was left erect.

It should be observed that about ten years before the present war broke out two events occurred which rather tended to confirm the Prussians in their delusion. First, in 1904 Russia, a power which Bismarck had always sought to conciliate and of which even his successors had always stood in some awe, was decisively defeated by Japan. This disaster, which among other things brought into prominence the defects of the Russian military system, was followed by an insurrectionary movement in Russia itself. The Hohenzollerns, in accordance with their traditional policy, lent their support to the Tsar's Government in resisting that movement which, after a fierce struggle, collapsed, mainly, perhaps, owing to its gradual divorce from the national, and especially from the religious, instincts of the populace. But the Japanese War and the abortive Revolution tended to make the Prussian rulers believe that the effective power of Russia had been overrated; that she need not be feared.

The next year, 1905, a deliberate and pro-

vocative challenge offered by Germany to France found the latter unprepared; the resignation of M. Delcassé followed, and Prussian diplomacy scored a decided success—small, perhaps, in its practical value, but calculated to impress the public mind of Europe, and especially the public mind of Prussia itself.

This diplomatic check to France was followed by an even more decided check to Russia. This arose out of the affair of the “Young Turk” Revolution, when a small group of intriguers organized in Masonic Lodges and financed by the wealthy Jews of Salonika, suborned the Turkish Army and pulled down the Sultan, Abdul Hamid II, an able sovereign, who had ruled, indeed, as a Turk always rules, but had preserved the independence and prestige of the Ottoman Empire through a very difficult time with great skill and foresight. His successors showed no such competence, and their triumph dealt a death-blow to the Ottoman power; for that power rested on a great religion, and of all religions the “Young Turks” were utterly contemptuous. Austria seized the opportunity to annex formally two provinces of the Turkish Empire, Bosnia and

Herzegovina, which they had been occupying under a nominal Turkish suzerainty since 1878. Serbia, whose people had a racial—and to a great extent religious—affinity to the population of these provinces, vehemently protested, and her protest was backed by Russia. But the rulers of Germany not only let it be known that they would support Austria to the point of war, but rapidly massed troops on the Russian frontier. Russia had not yet recovered from the effects of the Japanese War, and the convulsions which followed it. Her mobilization was in any case slow. France showed a marked indisposition to be drawn into the quarrel, and without France England was not likely to move. Russia gave way, and compelled Serbia to do the same.

Meanwhile the naval strength of Germany was being continually augmented, not as Bismarck would have augmented it, steadily and quietly, but to the accompaniment of a continual flourish of trumpets and of loud (if unofficial) threats against this country. Thus was Great Britain forced to change her traditional policy and throw in her lot with France and Russia. No one who has comprehended

the real character and aims of Prussia, and who values either the national self-respect of England or the rights and liberties of Europe, will be anything but thankful for the change; but it is doubtful if anything but the insolence of Prussia's threats and the menace of her provocatively paraded preparations would have induced our rulers to make it.

Two other events must be mentioned if we are to understand rightly the motives which induced the rulers of Germany to provoke the present war.

One was the episode of Agadir. At a time when France was successfully pushing forward an expedition against Fez, the capital of Morocco, the German Government sent a warship to the harbour of Agadir on the Atlantic coast. The whole character of this move has been much misunderstood. The amazing story told by the ex-spy “Armgard Karl Graves” may be only a string of lies, but the picture he gives of the Prussian attitude is certainly not far from the truth. The sending of the *Panther* to Agadir was not a challenge to France. The spot chosen was far away from the part of North Africa which the French

desired to penetrate. It was much more of a challenge to England, for, as a glance at the map will show, the new harbour which it was proposed to create there was ideally suited for striking at all our principal trade routes, and we have had a good reason during the present war to be thankful that it was not available as a naval base. The main object, however, was undoubtedly to see how fast the Franco-British alliance held. Its effect was to show that such an attempt would be resisted by the combined forces of both countries. Then the *Panther* left Agadir, the German Government not being prepared for immediate war. To the Prussian people, deliberately kept in the dark in regard to all such matters, the evacuation seemed a mere surrender, and it became the more important to wipe it out as soon as circumstances more favourable to Germany arose.

The second event was the outbreak and successful prosecution of the Balkan Wars. Here a policy hostile to that pursued by Prussia, a policy which had for its aim the destruction of Turkish rule in the European provinces of the Ottoman Empire, appealed to arms and won. The Germanic Powers could not prevent it

winning, though Austria precipitated the second Balkan War by stopping Serbia's outlet to the sea and insisting (with Italy) on the creation of the neutral State of Albania, whose territory was artificially extended so as to include the all-important strategic position of Valona. Nevertheless—and it is very important to remember this—the Balkan Wars represented in the eyes of the world, as a whole, a defeat for the Germanic Powers, whose ally and dependant Turkey had been. It was also a special blow to Prussian military prestige; for the training of the Turkish army was Prussian.

I mention these four incidents in order because they help us to understand the state of mind of the Prussian rulers, and the understanding of that state of mind is the key to the whole mystery of the present war and its origin.

Let us suppose a man whose main ambition is to establish his superiority in wealth over another man. Let us imagine him caught by accident without his cheque-book and compelled to borrow a sovereign in the presence of his rival. What will he do? If he is a man with anything of the Prussian in him he will

seize the next opportunity of displaying his wealth in the most ostentatious fashion, or he will make on the other man some sudden claim which will demonstrate his comparative poverty.

Just such was the situation of the Imperial Government, and just so did it act.

It was the whole aim of Prussian policy to make the world believe that the German Empire was stronger than its rivals. Probably the Prussian rulers, certainly the Prussian people, believed it themselves. Moreover two of the incidents referred to, the dismissal of M. Delcassé and the abandonment of Bosnia, had seemed to justify the belief. But then it was overclouded. Germany had the appearance of having retreated from Agadir under Franco-British pressure, and of having been compelled to permit a rearrangement of the Balkan States unfavourable both to her interests and her prestige.

There were only two courses that could restore what had been lost. The Triple Entente must either be crushed by arms or it must be dissolved, and each of its separate members forced to choose between a public humiliation and a war without allies. The second alternative was

desired by Prussia: for the first, she was, if necessary, prepared.

I emphasize this point, because those who are disposed to disbelieve, in spite of the unanswerable evidence of public documents, in the full responsibility of Prussia for this war, have just one argument which may seem plausible. How, they ask, is it possible to believe that Germany deliberately provoked a war in which she had so little chance of ultimate success? The answer is, that she did not, in the first instance, intend war; she hoped for a surrender, which would shatter the Triple Entente and leave her hands free for the crushing or humiliation of France and finally for a successful attack on this country.

The incident which gave her, as she thought, the desired opening was the assassination of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria.

This remarkable man was the last of that breed of skilful and original statesmen who have held together the curious composite Empire of the Hapsburgs. It is a mistake to speak of Austria as if she were a nation. Austria is simply the Hapsburgs, and the Hapsburgs are simply a dynasty. The various

dominions which acknowledge the sovereignty of that dynasty are united by no common tie of national sentiment. They do not think of themselves as "Austrians," but as Germans, Czechs, Poles, Magyars, Slovaks, or what not. On the other hand the Austrian Empire does not, like the Prussian, rest on mere military domination. No European power has been more constantly beaten in war with less visible result. The Hapsburgs have ruled by diplomacy and statecraft, relying on the playing off of one people against another, and on the maintenance of a careful balance among rival powers. From the time of Kaunitz onwards they never lacked men capable of such management.

The policy of the Archduke Ferdinand was as far-sighted as it was daring. He aimed at a real union of all the races which made up the Austrian Empire on the basis of the one thing common to almost all of them—the Catholic religion. On this ground northern and southern Slavs (his wife who was murdered with him was a Pole) could rally to the House of Hapsburg. Austria-Hungary could assume the profitable office which Masonic sectarianism had lost to

France, that of protector of Catholic interests in the Near East, and would thus become a formidable counterpoise to Russia, the traditional protector of the Orthodox Church. But in order that this policy might succeed the Catholic Slavs must be made to feel that they enjoyed full freedom and equality under the Hapsburg Crown. The chief obstacle to this lay in the irritating privileges and exclusive spirit of the two oligarchies—German and Magyar—which practically ruled the dual empire. These privileges Francis Ferdinand set himself to curtail, and of that spirit he was the known and avowed enemy.

On June 28, 1914, he was assassinated in the streets of Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia. The murderers were apparently Bosnians of Slavonic race. What ramifications there may have been in connection with the conspiracy we do not yet know, and, perhaps, shall never know. The Austrian Government professes to have proofs that it was hatched in Belgrade, and that Serbian officers were accessories to it; but these proofs have not yet been produced. It is clear that the aims of the Archduke were likely to be very distasteful to the Orthodox Slavs of

Serbia and to their brothers within the Austrian Empire as well as to the Orthodox Government of Russia. On the other hand it is certain that they were at least equally offensive to German and Magyar officialdom at Vienna and Budapest—nay, to the old Emperor himself, and still more to his ally at Berlin. There are some queer features about the story that suggest some sort of double treason : for instance, the extraordinary failure of the authorities to protect this Archduke's life, even after one attempt on it had been made. Finally, there is the startling declaration of the Serbian Government that that Government had had suspicions of one of the assassins (an Austrian subject), but on making inquiries of the Austrian Government had been assured that the man was “harmless and *under its protection.*” All this looks rather as if, though the actual criminals may have been Pan-Serbian fanatics, the *agent provocateur* was not absent from their deliberations. But I need not go into these dark matters further. In order to be as fair as possible to the enemy, let us assume that the Austrian Government did hold in its hand proof of Serbian complicity in the plot.

If it were possible to conceive the paradox of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand having to deal with the situation created by his own murder, or, if he had been able to bequeath to a successor his abilities and his policy, it is not difficult to guess how the problem would have been handled. He would certainly have used the opportunity to reassert the Hapsburg power in the Balkans and to humble and discredit Serbia. If he had proof of Serbian guilt he would either have published it or, perhaps more probably, he would have communicated it privately to the Serbian Government with a threat that it would be published if certain concessions were not made. How hard and humiliating and even unjust he might have made the terms of Serbia's submission without provoking war may be seen by the extent to which Serbia was forced by Russia to accept the Austrian demands, monstrous as they were. Francis Ferdinand would have counted on this, and probably scored a great increase of prestige for Austria at the expense of both Serbia and Russia. But war he would at all costs have avoided, for from that the Hapsburgs had nothing to gain and everything to lose.

The Austrian Empire does not show at its best in war. Even a war with Serbia single-handed would cost a great effort, for Serbia had already displayed in two brilliant campaigns the splendid military prowess of her arms. Moreover a war with Serbia was almost bound to mean a war with Russia, and Russia could indubitably crush Austria with one hand. If Austria were saved from such a fate, it could only be by the intervention of Prussia, and if such intervention were successful, Berlin and not Vienna must be the gainer. Nay, Berlin would inevitably gain at the expense of Vienna: the Hapsburgs would be more than ever mere dependants of the Hohenzollerns, who would become the real masters of the Empire as well as the reversionaries of its German provinces.

When all this is kept in view, it is impossible to imagine that any one who had the interests of the Hapsburg dynasty at heart could have advised Francis Joseph to throw away every diplomatic advantage in order to make peace impossible and war an immediate certainty. Yet that is what he unquestionably did. The whole interest of the negotiations in their first

phase centres round the question of why he did it.

But first let us follow the course of events. The Archduke was, as I say, murdered on June 28. For nearly a month Austria did nothing. She said nothing to her antagonist Serbia, nothing to her own ally Italy. Neither the Russian nor the British Government could obtain any information as to her intentions. All that was known during that month of silence was that Austria was replenishing her stocks of ammunition. We shall see, however, that the German Government was throughout this time in close and confidential communication with its ally.

On July 22 the Serbian Government received its first communication from Vienna. It took the form of an ultimatum. A categorically satisfactory answer was to reach the Austrian Government within forty-eight hours. A refusal or evasion, or even a remonstrance on any single point, would mean instant war.

Now any one who fairly examines this amazing document will at once perceive that, with whatever intention it was sent, it was certainly not intended to be accepted. Nay, those who

framed it were clearly afraid above all things of its acceptance, and were always on the guard against this dangerous possibility. Wherever a demand might conceivably, though not without cruel mortification, be complied with, something is added calculated to make compliance out of the question. Thus the Serbian Government is not only asked to publish an official condemnation of all Anti-Austrian propaganda, but virtually to plead guilty (not a tittle of evidence of its guilt being produced) to having in violation of solemn pledges encouraged such propaganda in the past. The Serbian Government is further asked to do things which (as must have been perfectly well known both in Vienna and in Berlin) it was not constitutionally competent to do—as, for instance, to suppress and confiscate newspapers. It was asked to do things which no Government is physically capable of doing—to control the secret proceedings of unnamed persons. Finally, three demands were made which I set out verbatim. They are plainly inconsistent with any sort of national independence; indeed I cannot see how the most triumphant military conquest could have annexed Serbia more completely

to the Hapsburg Empire than would their acceptance.

“To remove from the military service, and from the administration in general, all officers and functionaries guilty of propaganda against the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy *whose names and deeds the Austro-Hungarian Government reserve to themselves the right of communicating to the Royal Government.*

“To accept the collaboration in Serbia of representatives of the Austro-Hungarian Government for the suppression of the subversive movement directed against the territorial integrity of the Monarchy.

“To take judicial proceedings against accessories to the plot of June 28 who are on Serbian territory. *Delegates of the Austro-Hungarian Government will take part in the investigation thereto.*”

It is clear that the Emperor of Austria was playing not for a diplomatic victory but for a rupture. I think I have made it equally clear that the Hapsburg dynasty had everything to hope from such a diplomatic victory and everything to fear from such a rupture. It may be suggested that the Emperor Francis Joseph was an old man, already cruelly wounded more than once in his family life, and that the tragic death

of his heir drove him beyond the limits of reason; but, laying aside the notorious fact that he hated that heir, the month's delay precludes the idea of a mere outburst of passion.

No, the plain conclusion—and, as we shall see, it is borne out by the whole course of subsequent negotiations—is that some other person or Power, whose interests *might* be promoted by a rupture, was using Francis Joseph as a cat's-paw.

That Power, of course, could only be Prussia. Let us see how the situation affected the aims of Prussia, and how the Kaiser and his Ministers might conceive it to be to their interest to act.

Prussia had little interest in the Balkan troubles, except in so far as she had appeared as the unsuccessful protector of the Turk. Her Government, theoretically Protestant, practically Atheist, had no possible concern with the religious quarrels of Greek and Latin. She had only a secondary interest in the maintenance of the Austrian Empire; indeed she probably hoped ultimately to acquire a large accession of territory on the dissolution of that Empire. But she had a very direct interest in

re-establishing that prestige which the retreat from Agadir and the overthrow of Turkey had somewhat damaged. She had, above all, a very pressing interest in the break-up of the Triple Entente and the isolation of her three potential enemies. Let us see why she may have thought the occasion promising for such a project.

Russia was exceedingly anxious to avoid war. She had good reason to be so, for her internal situation seemed not a little dangerous. There were symptoms of a revival of the revolutionary activities of 1905 : a great strike had been declared among the artisans of her principal towns, and a friend of mine saw the barricades being thrown up in what was then still St. Petersburg a week before war broke out. How strongly the Tsar's Government felt the dangers of an international crisis is shown by the pressure it put on Serbia to meet every demand of Austria's that could thinkably be met. Still, if Serbia were attacked, Russia would have to fight or lose her whole influence in the Balkans and confess herself a defeated and humbled power.

I have said that the Prussians, with the

Russo-Japanese War in their minds, almost certainly underrated the military effectiveness of Russia. At any rate, they felt confident that they and their Austrian allies could easily beat Russia if Russia was fighting single-handed. But would Russia be single-handed? It is at this point that I fancy the principal Prussian miscalculations began.

That Parliamentary system, which so constantly misrepresents the French nation, had in the earlier months of 1914 evolved a Chamber of which, though the capital, which always leads France, had shown a vigorous national spirit, the general complexion was what is called in France *Blocard*—that is to say Masonic and more or less Pacifist. The Socialists, opposed by tradition both to war and to the Russian alliance, had received a great accession of strength. An attempt to form a Coalition Government leaning partly on the Right had failed, and the Premiership had been entrusted to M. Viviani, an ex-Socialist and a sometime opponent of those military measures, notably the Three Years' Service Law, by which France sought to secure herself from Prussian aggression. From the new Government not only the

Conservatives but those Radicals who, like M. Briand and M. Millerand, had taken up a strongly national attitude, were excluded. M. Jaurés, the Socialist leader, though not a member of it, was believed to be its master.

These things, we know, were carefully noted in Berlin. The Prussians had always reckoned on the Anti-Militarist agitation conducted by M. Gustav Hervé as an ally : it is said that they counted on a rising in half-a-dozen French industrial towns at the instant of mobilization. They probably now felt that they could reckon also on a Pacifist element in the Ministry and in the Chambers.

It is probable that in the earlier stages, at least, of the negotiations, Prussia hoped for the neutrality of France. She certainly expected, and that up to the last moment, the neutrality of England. England had been involved by the professional sham-fighting of her politicians in a trouble which at the moment looked serious. The agreement between the Front Benches that Home Rule must be granted to Ireland had not been accompanied by any satisfactory settlement of the small but very real problem of the population of the north-east corner of that

island whose national and still more whose religious sentiments were hostile to government from Dublin. Round this detail, which ought to have been arranged at once by the simple device of the local plebiscite, the play-acting began once more, and it did not end until a theatrical pretence of coercion had stimulated both Nationalists and Orangemen to arm, and dragged the armed forces of the Crown into a mischievous association with political parties. The Prussians, served all too well by their spies, whom by their traditional system of promiscuous payment for any information received, they had stimulated to send in any reports that might be floating about, seem to have believed sincerely that we were on the verge of Civil War, and that our army had failed us. It is also more than probable that some of the many wealthy men (such as in peaceful times mainly control our politics) who were of German birth or connections, felt able to assure their compatriots that it was in their power to prevent this country engaging in a war. Anyhow, the Prussian authorities clearly believed that we were certain to remain neutral, and one may surmise that they hoped

that our refusal might influence the conduct of France.

To return to the Prussian plan. Russia, if deserted by her allies, must either fight single-handed or surrender. Which ever she did, the Triple Entente would be destroyed. Russia could not be expected to come to the assistance of those who in her hour of need had failed her. It would then be possible to play the same game with France without danger of Russian intervention. The Franco-British combination would again be “tested”—it was hoped with more satisfactory results. France in her turn would be either beaten or humiliated, Belgium and perhaps Holland annexed, and then the way would be clear for the last war which would secure Prussia on the seas and over the seas the supremacy which she had already achieved on the Continent.

I do not say that this was a wise plan. It was not such a plan as Bismarck would have devised; and the event has proved that it was based on a whole series of miscalculations. But I do say that it is an intelligible plan, and that it is consonant with the psychology of Prussia, of Post-Bismarckian Prussia, the

Prussia of bombast and self-delusion, the Prussia of the decadence. And I say that its adoption by the rulers of the German Empire is the one hypothesis which fully explains the whole story of the negotiations.

That story being armed with its key, we may now resume. And it will be well to follow it not only in the British official account (*Great Britain and the European Crisis*. Wyman & Sons. *1d.*), but in the German Government's own white paper which, along with much special pleading, contains some very interesting information which was necessarily unknown to our Foreign Office. I take my quotations from the translation given in a supplement of the *New York Times*, dated August 24. The paper itself bears the date of August 3.

First of all we have the full admission that the German Government was privy to the attack on Serbia during the whole month of its secret preparation. Here is the quotation—

“ In view of these circumstances Austria had to admit that it would not be consistent either with the dignity or self-preservation of the monarchy to look on any longer at the operations on the other side of the border without

taking action. The Austro-Hungarian Government advised us of this view of the situation and asked our opinion on the matter. We were able to assure our ally most heartily of our agreement with her view of the situation, and to assure her that any action that she might consider it necessary to take in order to put an end to the movement in Serbia directed against the existence of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy would receive our approval. We were fully aware in this connection that warlike moves on the part of Austria-Hungary against Serbia would bring Russia into the question and might draw us into a war in accordance with our duties of an ally. However, recognizing the vital interest of Austria-Hungary which were at stake, we could neither advise our ally to a compliance that would have been consistent with her dignity, nor could we deny her our support in this great hour of need."

We have it then acknowledged that Berlin was a party to the original outrage. That she certainly inspired that outrage I shall endeavour to show presently.

But at least the pretence that Berlin endeavoured to influence Vienna in a pacific direction which did much duty in the days immediately preceding the war, especially while the neutrality of England was still hoped for,

is thrown overboard. The German Government consented to "transmit suggestions of various kinds for the maintenance of peace" from Sir Edward Grey to Vienna, but she does not now pretend that she advised the acceptance of any of them; and in view of what happened later it is pretty safe to assume that they were transmitted with a broad hint that they should be refused. The language of the German White Paper on this subject is so exquisitely Prussian that I must really transcribe it—

"From the very beginning of the conflict we took the stand that this was an affair of Austria which she alone would have to bring to a decision with Serbia. We have therefore devoted our entire efforts to localizing the war and to convincing the other Powers that Austria-Hungary was compelled to take justified defensive methods and appeal to arms. We took the stand emphatically that no civilized nation had the right in this struggle against lack of culture (*Unkultur*) and criminal political morality to prevent Austria from acting, and to take away the just punishment from Serbia. We instructed our representatives abroad in that sense."

So far so good. We knew all about Prussian

“culture”—and Prussian “political morality” already. But now we come to a new development which throws a flood of light upon all that had happened before.

Austria had declared war on Serbia on July 28. But in the last three days of the month she suddenly began to show herself much more reasonable. She consented to a proposal for direct negotiations with Russia, and these negotiations were proceeding so satisfactorily that peace seemed almost assured. Says Sir Maurice de Bunsen in his last despatch from Vienna: “M. Schebeko [the Russian Ambassador] to the end was working hard for peace. He was holding the most conciliatory language to Count Berchtold [the Austrian Foreign Minister], and he informed me that the latter, as well as Count Forgach [his Under-Secretary] had responded in the same spirit.” Then suddenly, when peace was already in full sight, came war. I again quote Sir Maurice de Bunsen—

“Unfortunately these conversations at St. Petersburg and Vienna were cut short by the transfer of the dispute to the more dangerous ground of a direct conflict between Germany

and Russia. Germany intervened on July 31 by means of her double ultimatums to St. Petersburg and Paris. The ultimatums were of a kind to which only one answer is possible, and Germany declared war on Russia on August 1 and on France on August 3. A few days' delay might in all probability have saved Europe from one of the greatest calamities in history."

It is clear that in the end the Prussian Government forced war not only on her enemies but on her unfortunate ally. The pretence that the alleged Russian and French mobilization forced her hand is nonsense. The anxiety of France to avoid anything that could ever be construed into hostile action placed her at a grave disadvantage when war came, and, if Russia partially mobilized she only acted with the commonest prudence. Her mobilization was notoriously a slower business than that of her enemies, one of whom was already fully mobilized. She could hardly be expected to forget how Prussia, by massing troops on her undefended frontiers, had compelled her to a humiliating surrender over Bosnia: she was not likely to be caught napping a second time.

The real meaning of the whole story is made clear by the sudden hesitation of Vienna to proceed to extremities (Austria did not, in fact, declare war against Russia till a week later than Germany) and the equally sudden decision of Berlin for instant war.

I take the explanation to be this : Austria had adopted her outrageously provocative policy in the matter of Serbia at the direct instigation of Berlin, and that she had done so on definite assurance that she would have no one but Serbia to fight, and that her ally would see that Russia did not move. When it became obvious that the Prussian assurances were unfounded, that Russia meant to fight, and that all Europe would be involved in the war, Austria, whose rulers would be risking everything in such a war and could get nothing out of it, wished to withdraw, and insisted on opening communications with Russia. What exactly passed between the allies we cannot tell ; it is significant that none of their communications appear in the German White Paper. But it is evident that the Prussian Government feared a peaceful solution which would look like another diplomatic success for the Triple Entente. Rather

than face such a possibility she would herself precipitate war and drag her duped and helpless ally along with her. If the reader will turn back to the description I have given of the Ems affair and of how Bismarck made war inevitable in 1870—or better still, read Bismarck's own account of these transactions—he will see how little the political morality of Prussian statesmen has changed in the interval, however much their intelligence may have deteriorated.

By the time the Prussians determined on war with Russia they knew, whatever may have been their previous illusions, that they would have to fight France as well. What they were perhaps less prepared for was the absolute unanimity of France in the face of their aggression. Before war was declared, Jean Jaurés, on whom they had counted to oppose French intervention, made a speech to an international gathering of Socialists at Brussels, in which he denounced in unmeasured terms the manner in which Serbia had been treated. "We are for the weak against the strong," he said. A few days afterwards he was assassinated, whether by a fanatical madman or by a secret emissary

of Germany cannot yet be said with any confidence. But more startling phenomena were to follow the actual outbreak of the war. The *Confédération Générale de Travail*, which had been expected to oblige Berlin by getting up a revolution in the Kaiser's interest, issued instead a manifesto appealing to all its members to rally to the national defence; and Gustav Hervé, the apostle of Anti-Militarism, went straight to the War Office and begged to be sent into the firing-line.

There was still one unknown quantity in the European situation—the attitude of England. It is evident from the dramatic account we have of our Ambassador's last interview with the German Chancellor, that Prussia counted absolutely on the inaction of this country. That she should have so counted, seeing that the reduction of this country to vassalage was the real objective of her complex policy, seems extraordinary. But, apart from the exaggerated importance which their spies had led them to attach to the Irish trouble there was much to encourage their delusion.

It may be well to say quite frankly that in my judgment there was a course which Sir

Edward Grey could have taken which might possibly—though not certainly—have averted this war. That course was the one persistently pressed on us by M. Sazonof, the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs. If at the very beginning of the trouble we had declared that, in the event of war breaking out, we should join France and Russia, it is not altogether unlikely that Berlin might have paused and allowed Austria to extricate herself, as she was anxious to do, from an untenable position. But Sir Edward Grey persistently refused to make such a declaration, and Berlin drew the natural inference.

Nor was it in Berlin only that that inference was drawn. Many Englishmen shared the impression. Many of us will not easily forget the black week which preceded the actual declaration of war, when we half feared that we were going to see England lose her honour and wondered vaguely whether an Englishman could ever go abroad again without feeling the contempt of mankind striking him in the face like a blow.

Fear was the heavier upon those who knew best how powerful were the forces arrayed on

the side of a shameful inaction. There were among the wealthy men who finance our politicians some who had fancy religions, hostile to arms, while others had a more human and intelligible objection to paying taxes. Worse, there were Germans and German Jews among them, men powerful in the City and all-powerful at Westminster. Their influence was soon felt. Everywhere one could almost physically feel the pressure of cosmopolitan finance seeking to swing English policy clear of intervention.

Fortunately the Prussians saved us from the intrigues of their allies here by a last brutal and cynical violation of international honour, which was also a challenge to our own. It has been said by some that the defence of Belgian neutrality was only a pretext. I should be the last to deny that if Belgium had never existed it would have been none the less necessary, both to our honour and to our safety, to come to the aid of France in her fight against Prussian aggression.

All the same, I doubt—and I think from a remark he made to the German Ambassador, that Sir Edward Grey himself doubted—whether anything less flagrant than the Belgian

crime would have nerved our Government to defy the wealth and power of the Pacifists and the international money dealers.

As to the rights and wrongs of the Belgian question, there is really no argument. Belgium was a small and pacific nation, whose attitude towards its neighbours had always been scrupulously correct, and whose neutrality had more than once been solemnly guaranteed by all the Powers, including Prussia and England. Prussia, alleging no wrong, proposed to violate that neutrality because it would be convenient to attack France by a road which France, relying on the pledges of Belgium and the guarantee of the Powers, had left unbarred. She proposed, in the first instance, to ask Belgium to break her promise to France. Failing that, Prussia would break her promise to Belgium and invite England to facilitate the breach by breaking hers. In exchange for all this wreck of promises, Belgium and England were to receive a new assortment of the never-to-be-broken promises of Prussia's King! There is a curious simplicity as well as an insolent wickedness in this proposal that fairly takes one's breath away.

It has been well said that we can never know all the good in men until we know all the evil. Our habit of plastering over the sins of the great with vague words of confidence and eulogy, sometimes does them a real injustice. Only those who know how deeply corruption had bitten into the public life of England will be able to understand how much real heroism there was in the refusal of our rulers to obey the money-bags in the matter of this war. To many of us it seemed that among the governing class of England honour was utterly dead. They had taken the filthy money of base usurers, many of whom were not even Englishmen. They had received these men in their houses. They had sold them titles for themselves and places on the Front Benches for their relations and dependants. They had connived at every profitable ramp, and hushed up every unspeakable scandal. There seemed nothing to which they would not stoop. And yet there was something. The most dramatic—perhaps in a sense the noblest—incident of the dark drama is one of which we shall never hear, for those who behaved well will conceal it as carefully as those who behaved basely. It

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came when the plutocrats, at the conclusion of their long tale of dishonouring bargains, asked for the honour of England to be thrown in as a make-weight against their money—and their demand was refused.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE BARBARIANS

ON August 3 this year bodies of soldiers in blue-grey uniforms began to cross the narrow river which marks the frontier between the German Empire and the little independent State of Belgium. For days they continued to pour across that line, mounted Uhlans with their lances, great masses of infantry closely packed, the tall men of the Prussian Guard, carrying with them a lingering memory of the madness of old Frederick William. Guns also came with them, maxims, field artillery, and a little later the huge howitzer siege guns, the latest masterpieces of Krupp, able to throw shells of a ton weight over miles of country, built to make an end of the forts of Paris.

All these things were new, and yet there was that about these great masses of moving men that recalled a memory. So fifteen centuries before companies of half-civilized mercenaries

from the marches of the Empire, and masses of savage raiders from beyond its borders, may have passed that same stream and seen before them the security and wealth of the Roman world with all its rich possibilities of outrage and plunder. The men that now followed in their track were trained in an exact discipline and armed with all the latest instruments of science. But such differences could not prevent a thrill of recollection running through civilized Europe which had seen the thing before. They were the Barbarians. And they were returning.

They approached the first of the great fortresses which blocked their path. It was Liége. They demanded its surrender. The thunder of its guns answered them. It was the answer of civilization. Tiny Belgium, standing at the moment alone in the face of that immense aggression, felt her kinship with Europe answered for Europe, and placed Europe for ever in her debt.

Of the dreadful price at which Belgium purchased imperishable glory I shall speak here only so far as it is necessary to the understanding of what Prussia is and why she must

be destroyed. There are no words that an Englishman can find in which to speak of Belgium and all that we feel about her. I prefer to leave such feeble words as I could use unwritten, and to wait for the day when we may help her to see her desire done upon her enemies. But one aspect of her martyrdom relates so closely to the subject of this book that I may not pass it by. No account of how Prussia makes war would be complete without a corresponding picture of how she wages it.

In the two pictures the same outstanding features appear: a contempt of morals and a contempt of honour. It is a favourite gambit of the weak-minded Pacifist, who cannot even see what an institution *is* before he begins to assail it, to say that we must not complain of the outrages incidental to war since war is itself an outrage. Now war certainly involves the deliberate infliction of physical pain and death; and, if you are a Materialist, and think physical pain and death the worst conceivable evils, you are entitled to say that, according to your philosophy, war is itself an outrage. But unless you would be a bigot as well as a

Materialist, you must not assume that all men accept your first principles as self-evident; and you must recognize that a doctrine which would condemn war has certainly never been part of the Christian creed, any more than a doctrine which would justify outrages on non-combatants has been part of the creed of the European warrior.

War, as Christendom has always recognized it as allowable, is an affair conducted under certain strict rules. Some of these rules are dictated by the claims of the Christian virtues of justice and mercy. Others are dictated by that conception of which I spoke in a previous chapter, which is not in itself specifically a Christian virtue, but is necessary to the practice of any high virtue—the conception of honour. The essence of that conception is reciprocity. The rules may vary, but, such as they are, they must be well known and apply to both sides. Each must be able to count on the other observing them. Now the essence of the Prussian theory is the denial of reciprocity. The Prussian, as acknowledged Superior to the race in general, claims in war, as in peace, to do what he chooses, and at the same time counts, as

did Frederick the Great, on the advantage which he will derive from other men being hampered by scruples from which he is free. That fundamental conception is the key to the whole ghastly record of Prussian atrocities.

It is quite certain that the campaign in Belgium and in Northern France has been conducted by the Prussian military authorities with a savage cruelty altogether inconsistent with the traditions of civilized warfare. I am not at all concerned to deny that in this connection there has been exaggeration and falsehood. Some stories have been proved to be untrue, and others are of such a nature as to raise doubts on their first hearing. We may well admit that idle rumour, journalistic love of sensation, and even deliberate falsehood and fraud (as often as not devised by the enemy for the purpose of discrediting the real case against the Prussian system) have had their share in many of the stories which are current here.

But this does not touch the indisputable minimum contained, for instance, in the official Belgian report, drawn up under the supervision of men of unquestionable judgment

and integrity, including the Chief Justice of Belgium. Nor does it touch the stories of eye-witnesses, including some of our own soldiers as well as those who have actually taken in mutilated Belgian children, which we have all heard personally. Finally, it does not and cannot touch the official admissions of the Prussian Government itself.

For that Government, at least until it was scared into some measure of hypocrisy by the disgust of neutral nations and especially of the United States, made no disguise of its ruthless intentions. The Kaiser himself told his troops that they must behave in conquered territories with "a certain frightfulness"; and they have done it.

On the gross offences against international law, to which the Prussian official proclamations themselves bear witness, it is unnecessary to comment in detail. Let the following proclamation, admittedly issued by the military authorities during their brief stay in Rheims, speak for itself—

"In the event of an action being fought either to-day or in the immediate future in the neighbourhood of Rheims, or in the town itself,

the inhabitants are warned that they must remain absolutely calm and must in no way try to take part in the fighting. They must not attempt to attack either isolated soldiers or detachments of the German Army. The erection of barricades, the taking up of paving-stones in the streets in a way to hinder the movements of the troops, or, in a word, any action that may embarrass the German Army, is formally forbidden.

“With a view to securing adequately the safety of the troops and to instil calm into the population of Rheims, the persons named below have been seized as hostages by the Commander-in-Chief of the German Army. These hostages will be hanged at the slightest attempt at disorder. Also the town will be totally or partly burnt and the inhabitants will be hanged for any infraction of the above.

“By Order of the German Authorities.”

Then follow the names of eighty-one inhabitants of Rheims, including four priests.

This atrocious document proves conclusively, if any proof were wanted, that the atrocities committed by the German armies are not the ordinary excesses or reprisals of soldiers, but are part of the deliberate policy of the Prussian authorities. It is unnecessary to emphasize the monstrous violation not only of

justice and humanity, but of international law involved in the Rheims proclamation. It may be doubted, indeed, whether the healthy conscience of Europe really acquiesces in the Prussian claim that a man, defending his own home against a foreign invader, should be treated as an assassin if he is not in uniform; but that claim has, for good or ill, been more or less admitted. The Germans may plead some sort of sanction for shooting the *franc-tireur*; but the *franc-tireur* is not here in question.

What the Prussians proposed to do was to hang some eighty or more admittedly innocent civilians, against whom no suspicion of hostile action was even suggested, if certain other people, over whom, being prisoners in the hands of the enemy, they could not possibly exercise the smallest control, resisted the brutality of the invaders.

This is simply murder, and no sophistry can make it anything else. It is earnestly to be hoped that wherever such a diabolical crime as is here shamelessly avowed as the intention of the Prussian authorities is committed, the officers responsible will be marked, and, when captured, will be dealt with as murderers.

The Prussian theory and practice is quite simple and logical. Morals being as inapplicable to war as to diplomacy, no considerations should enter into the conduct of a war except a calculation of the material factors likely to promote success. Now in the present war it was of the essence of the Prussian plan of campaign to strike an instant and overwhelming blow at France. The resistance of Belgium was an obstacle. To overcome that obstacle by the thorough military conquest and occupation of Belgium meant delay, and it meant the employment of men who were needed for the projected march on Paris. Therefore Belgium must be held, not by a regular military occupation, but by a reign of terror sufficiently savage to cow its inhabitants into submission.

I am not saying for a moment that, even from an unmoral point of view, such a policy is wise. I believe, on the contrary, that, like all the developments of the modern Prussian mind, it is tainted with a kind of madness which is the nemesis of a divorce from instinctive morals. And I also think that it involves a complete misunderstanding of the way in which the Christian conscience works in Europeans.

The Prussian, with his "Master Morality" and "Slave Morality," virtually divides the human race into bullies and cowards. He did not appear to be aware, until this war had broken out and had been carried to a certain point, that any other kind of man existed. Possibly that truth is beginning to dawn on him now. Before the war is over he may begin to realize that Christendom is essentially a military thing; not a sheep, but a lion. I think that history will see that it would have paid the Prussians much better to have treated Belgium with greatest respect and consideration, and to have refrained from inflicting any hardships not inseparable from the state of war. Had they done so it is quite possible that there would have been many Belgians who would have been inclined to say that enough had been done for honour, and that further resistance could not reasonably be expected of them. As it is there is no Belgian—and for the matter of that no Englishman or Frenchman—who has not had the horrors of the Prussian occupation—the slaughtered non-combatants, the desecrated churches, the outraged women and the mutilated children—branded into his mind, and

who does not feel that it would be unspeakable if peace were made until Prussia had paid to the last farthing for her crime.

The atrocities were not wisely calculated, but they were calculated. They were part of a deliberate policy pursued for a definite reason. Only when we have grasped this does the story become a plain and credible one. The horrors perpetrated in Belgium and later in Northern France must always remain unintelligible (and therefore difficult to believe) to those who do not perceive that horror was the effect aimed at.

Why, it may be asked, select for military execution or worse the most obviously helpless and harmless non-combatants, the very people whose presence and activities could not possibly constitute a military danger? Why make such a speciality of shooting priests? Why murder and outrage women? Why massacre or mutilate young children? How can the village *cure* be an obstacle to your 17-inch howitzers? How can old women and young girls resist the Prussian Guard? How can the cutting off of a baby's fingers or the gouging of one of its eyes help your plan of campaign? Do you expect the war to last till it grows up?

To all this the real Prussian answer is simple: "These things horrify you. That is why we do them. The congregation regard the priest as a holy man; therefore his death (the more if he is innocent of any offence) will impress their memories. Women in civilized war are held sacred; therefore we murder and outrage them to show that we are not waging civilized war. The helplessness of a child appeals irresistibly to the human heart; therefore we cut off its fingers to show that we are not human. Call us Supermen, call us Devils; it does not matter so long as you are afraid of us. The more you think we are Devils, the less likely you are to come within a mile of us, and your fear of our devilry will be a better protection of our lines of communication than three or four army corps could afford."

What I have said of the murder and mutilation of non-combatants applies also to the destruction of public and ancient buildings, the bombardment of undefended towns and the like. These also were in most instances not spontaneous, but calculated. The calculation was this: "The Belgians value their historic

monuments and will dislike their being destroyed. If we choose the one which they hold most sacred, every other town which possesses and values similar treasures will be put in fear. We will burn Louvain, taking special care to destroy its valuable library. Then such towns as Ghent, Bruges, Brussels itself, Antwerp will be the less likely to offer resistance, if we should need to occupy them. That Louvain has not in fact offered any resistance does not matter in the least. Its fate, innocent or guilty, will be equally an example to others. It will create terror; and that is all we want.” And as a fact the Prussian action does seem to have produced the desired result in the case of certain Belgian cities, such as Ghent, which desired to avoid the wholesale demolition of the memorials of their past.

All this is what distinguishes Prussian atrocities from those excesses which occur from time to time in all wars when troops get out of hand. The Prussian troops, in most cases, did not do these things because they were out of hand, but because they were only too well in hand. The German commanders had received orders to create “a certain frightfulness” in

Belgium. These officers, who had studied the military text-books of their country and knew exactly what was meant, passed on the order in more concrete form and in greater detail to their soldiers. The soldiers in their turn obeyed. I have no doubt that in many cases both officers and soldiers obeyed unwillingly. They obeyed because they were in the frame of mind which all Prussian discipline works to produce : because they were afraid to disobey. Every one who values the chivalric element in war prefers to admire his enemy, and one is therefore glad to note the several occasions upon which, according to reliable testimony, the German soldiers really did "get out of hand" and behave like decent and kindly Europeans. In the German Navy, when no special orders for atrocities appear to have been issued, the German record seems to be pretty clean and honourable, as well as being, when all the circumstances are considered, highly distinguished.

I have said so much of the atrocity of the Prussian spirit that I have hardly left myself space to speak of its other and much less

important quality, which is also the consequence of its loss, or rather repudiation, of the idea of "honour," its curious vulgarity. But that quality is very apparent, whether in the Emperor's crude and effeminate sneers at his "contemptible" enemies, or in the action of his son, the heir to the Prussian throne, who when ensconced in a French country house takes the opportunity to make away with the family plate after the fashion of a common burglar. Morals apart, what has become of the common sense of human dignity in royal personages who do such things? The answer is that it has gone the way of chivalry, humanity and honour, as result of that denial of the reciprocal rights of man and man which is the Prussian first principle. The Crown Prince doubtless thinks that in looting peaceful houses he is showing himself in the light of a splendid and renowned conqueror. The only answer is that civilized people do not feel like that.

We may take it, then, that the atrocities of the Prussians are in the main calculated and deliberately ordered. Nevertheless, the fact remains that human nature is so made that if you force men on pain of death or savage

punishment to behave like devils the probable result in most cases will be that, if they obey you, they become like devils. I have already pointed out that the twisting of the moral instincts which the whole Prussian system involves tends to produce that fearful moral disease which we call perversion. If this is so with civilians, it is much more so with soldiers, for the traditions of the profession of arms are chivalrous, and a soldier sins against his nature much more by such acts as the slaughter of women and children than an ordinary man would.

There is a certain ironical fitness in the fact that the Prussian Government selected the notorious Dr. Moll, one of its academic and official apologists for perversion, to write a report on "the state of mind of the Belgian people." His conclusion, so far as I remember, was that the Belgians were suffering from a "collective hallucination," the result of their "illiteracy" and of the unaccustomed "excitement" produced by the appearance of armed Prussians in their midst. I am not sure whether the Prussians themselves were part of the hallucination, or whether the Prussians were

really present, only the Belgians falsely imagined them to be cutting off children's fingers when they were really only shaking hands with them. In any case one might doubt Dr. Moll's ability to investigate the psychology of decent Christian folk. If he had turned his attention to the psychology of the Prussian officers and soldiers, he might have found a subject more suitable to his talents and more consonant with his former studies.

For it seems certain that the element of perverted malice mingled with that of deliberate political calculation in the case of many outrages both on human beings and on historic monuments. To take the less grave case of the latter, while the burning of Louvain seems to have had a definite object, the intimidation of the other historic Belgian towns where the Prussians wished to establish an undisputed dominion—the bombardment of Rheims Cathedral, though it must have been ordered by a high authority—seems to have been purely wanton. The lie that a post of observation had been stationed on the tower has been refuted by the French War Office, but it hardly needed refutation. The fact that it was not

put forward until several days had passed and until several other and quite contradictory explanations of the incident had been given stamps it as an after-thought. On the other hand, the deliberation with which shells were aimed at the noblest of all the heritages of Christendom is fully proved. There seems to have been no possible motive, political or military, for the outrage. It must have been simply malicious; that is to say, it proceeded from an evil will.

And yet there was a sense in which these Prussian soldiers were right. In attacking the monuments of the old civic freedom in Flanders and the monuments of the old European religion in France they were really attacking their enemy, the enemy which stands behind Cossack lances and French "75's" and British bayonets, the enemy that will conquer them at last: the soul of Europe.

Let me resume my narrative. The German armies swept on through devastated Belgium, through Northern France, up to the very gates of Paris. While their left wing threatened the city where more than a thousand years before

Count Robert had held his own against the Danes, their centre swept southward across the Marne. And still the Allies retired.

But they were fighting in a country full of the memories of resistance. Behind them was Rheims, where Joan of Arc brought a king to be crowned. To their left was Valmy, where the great Prussian charge, which should have crushed the Revolution, faltered and failed. A little way in front of them the waters of the Aube wound through fields where Danton had played as a child. And in the midst of their line of march stood the camp of Attila.

It was on the Feast of Our Lady's Nativity when they reached this country, so full of great memories, that the French General fell suddenly on their flank with a great reserve force whose onslaught saved Paris.

The Barbarians were driven back across the Marne, past Rheims, across the Aisne, step by step towards the darkness out of which they came.

## CHAPTER VII

“ THOU SHALT NOT SUFFER A WITCH TO LIVE ”

I now come to the practical part of this book. I have endeavoured to trace the history of Prussian policy from the days of Frederick the Great to the time of writing, and to show why, if Europe was not to perish, a European combination formed for the purpose of disarming Prussia was inevitable. From that argument a clear, practical moral is to be derived, and it is my intention to attempt to enforce that moral in the present chapter.

I shall assume the ultimate victory of the Allies. I think myself justified in doing so (though the “inevitable” victory is an unchivalrous and unmilitary conception) for three reasons. Firstly, every one of the Allies has staked almost its existence as an independent nation on the issue of the war, and is, therefore, bound to go on fighting to its last man; and two of them, at least, are in a position to carry on the struggle indefinitely, and would be

bound for their own sake to do so. Secondly, the complete failure of the Prussian attempt to crush France before the pressure of Russia began to be felt, implies the failure of the calculation upon which the Prussians themselves relied for success. Thirdly, it is no good discussing what would happen to Europe in the event of an ultimate Prussian victory, because, in that event, there would be no Europe for anything to happen to.

I assume, therefore, a victory for the Allies; and directly that victory begins to take bodily shape, I perceive a peril against which all of them must be on their guard, but which especially affects this country.

We say, and say justly, that for the purposes of this war we are a united people. That statement is true of us to-day as it was never true of us in relation to any public question which has been agitated within living memory. It is not that, as was the case during the South African War, there is a large majority in favour of the war and a comparatively small minority opposed to it. The whole nation is in favour of the war; those opposed to it are simply individuals who have, for one reason or

another, been temporarily or permanently denationalized. Those who cannot conceive of such a state of things are simply those to whom the word Democracy has never had any real meaning. Real democracy would mean government not by artificial electioneering majorities, but by just such corporate acts of the national will.

Nevertheless, it would be an error not to realize that there is a distinction to be drawn in this respect between our case and that of most of our Allies. Of France, for instance, it would at this moment be true to say that all Frenchmen (unless they are actually traitors) have at this moment a single will. That a particular Frenchman happens to be a Catholic or a Freethinker, a Socialist or a Royalist, makes no difference to his attitude, any more than such variations of opinion and creed would make any difference to a man's desire to knock out of the hands of an assassin the pistol which is being held to his head. Any Frenchman who were at this moment to offer public opposition to the war would certainly be killed. Only the other day we had a conspicuous illustration of the national temper.

M. Anatole France, for many years a protagonist of Pacifism, had, while warmly supporting the war, ventured to repeat some of the old futile, but (in the particular circumstances) more or less treasonable, rubbish about "international solidarity." He was instantly denounced—and very characteristically denounced with special vehemence by Gustav Hervé, once so strenuous an Anti-Militarist—and had to purge himself by offering his services, at the age of seventy, as a soldier. The same temper of unanimity would certainly be found in Belgium, and, I should guess, in Serbia. In Russia you might find, perhaps, a few unnational eccentrics prepared to oppose the war. But that is because Russia, like this country, is thought to be more or less immune from really serious invasion.

Thanks to our fleet, we, for the most part, believe ourselves to be safe from any invasion by the German army, and from the consequent repetition in Kent or Essex of the scenes which Flanders and Champagne have witnessed. I fancy that if there were a serious naval disaster or a raid upon our coasts, the populace would make very short work of the Pacifists. While,

however, we feel fairly secure we are not prepared to proceed to extremes, and such men are suffered to write and pamphleteer and even to venture on speech-making without serious molestation.

The same sense of security leads us to tolerate, as certainly no other nation would tolerate, the immunity which our Government extends to men of German birth and associations; men who have been and in some cases still are powerful in finance and politics; men who, if they are not actually betraying the country, are, at any rate, not likely to be wholeheartedly hostile to our present enemies.

Now I am decidedly of opinion that the toleration of the mere harmless, eccentric Pacifist is wise; and, though I think the toleration of the alien or semi-alien financier and plutocrat suicidal folly, I do not imagine that such men, whatever other harm they may be doing to us, are able at the present time to deflect, in any serious manner, the direction of our national policy. But the danger arising from the existence of these two groups may appear later.

So long as the issue remains in any way

doubtful, and especially so long as this country is in any danger, one may feel pretty well assured that proposals for an insufficient peace will fall upon deaf ears. But we cannot be so sure that this will be so after a victory, or a series of victories, which may appear to make the triumph of the Allies an assured event.

I believe that the great mass of Englishmen are determined that this war shall not end until our principal enemy is utterly broken and disarmed. But unfortunately in normal circumstances (and circumstances, in the conditions I have presumed, would be reverting towards the normal) it is not so much the opinions of the mass of Englishmen that will count as the opinions (or interests) of certain groups of wealthy men. And there is, unfortunately, a great deal of money and what is euphemistically called “influence,” which is ready to be mobilized on the Pacifist side as soon as circumstances appear favourable.

Take the case of the Press. Practically the whole English Press is governed by a few rich men. It is at the moment unanimously patriotic. But it would be sheer folly to forget that up to the very moment when war was

declared there was a considerable section of it that was sympathetic with our enemies.

The *Daily News* and the *Star* are the property of a rich cocoa manufacturer, who happens to inherit along with his wealth the religious faith of a curious seventeenth-century sect, which among the madnesses of that age (such as that of the Adamites, who went about naked to prove their innocence), developed the fantastic idea that Christianity forbade an appeal to arms. Up to the very moment of the outbreak of war the *Daily News* was fiercely Pro-German, not only denouncing Sir Edward Grey's diplomacy, but printing from day to day letters from Liberal M.P.'s and others protesting against our intervention, among the names appended being the significant one of Mr. Neil Primrose, a "Liberal Imperialist" by profession, but also a Rothschild by blood. Even the determination of Prussia to violate the neutrality of Belgium did not apparently satisfy the Cocoa Press that our action was legitimate, and the first leading article that appeared in its organ on the outbreak of war, expressed an only slightly chastened protest. It was not till a few days later that the *Daily*

*News* professed a complete conversion—the contents of the Official White Paper being offered to account for it. We were all glad of the change which bore testimony to the absolute unanimity with which the nation stood behind the Government. But it is impossible to avoid asking oneself the question: Might not another conversion, equally sudden and miraculous, appear as the first result of a decisive victory of the Allies? Is the old Cadbury dead, or only sleeping?

Another principal “Liberal” organ, the *Westminster Gazette*, is mainly in the hands of Sir Alfred Moritz Mond, a wealthy manufacturer of chemicals, who has “obtained” a baronetcy from the Government as well as a seat in the House of Commons. He was, as we learn from *Who's Who*, born in this country—to be exact, at Farnworth, near Widnes, in Lancashire. But his father, one Dr. Ludwig Mond, was undoubtedly of German birth. Sir Alfred Mond is, I have said, the virtual director of the policy of the *Westminster Gazette*.

For at least a week before the outbreak of the war the *Westminster Gazette* was publishing communications from “Our Own Cor-

respondent" in Berlin, every one of which was calculated to advantage the German Government in the diplomatic struggle which was to culminate in the war. On July 27 "Our Own Correspondent" gives expression to the "feeling" that the only means of avoiding an immediate and general European War is "the abstention of Russia from intervention." "Russia," he says, "will not be allowed to meddle in what is claimed to be entirely an Austro-Serbian affair." The policy of England is next considered, and it is stated that the British Foreign Office may exert "a really determining influence" if it "dissociates itself clearly from attempts to intervene against Austria." "It is assumed," we are told, "that such is British policy."

On July 30 we are treated to the pleasing news "that the *Westminster Gazette's* suggestion that assurances should be given to Russia that Austria will not annex Servian territory or extinguish Servian independence"—a proposal which Russia could not possibly accept, and a proposal, be it noted, of the very same character as that which we laughed to scorn when proffered by Prussia in the case of

Belgium—has been “printed in large type” in the *Koelnische Zeitung*, proudly described by “Our Own Correspondent” himself as “the organ of Wilhelmstrasse.” In the same communication it is remarked that the statement of another London newspaper (not the property of Sir Moritz Mond) that “England must stand by her friends” “has created an unfavourable impression.”

July 31 was, it will be remembered, the day on which the Prussian Government sent an ultimatum to Russia and another to France. On this same day “Our Own Correspondent,” speaking this time in his own person, assures his readers that “the Imperial Government and the Emperor do not want war,” tries to throw the whole blame on Russia, congratulates his proprietors upon the fact that “all the Berlin newspapers give prominence to the *Westminster Gazette’s* declaration of yesterday that England must keep a free hand,” and that an anti-English journal “which bitterly attacked Sir Edward Grey’s proposal as partisanship against Austria, approves the *Westminster’s* view as likely to check any aggressive ardour in Paris.”

Next day, August 1, came the climax. Under staring head-lines there appeared a "Special Message" from the German Government to the *Westminster Gazette*. "In the hope," writes "Our Own Correspondent," "of yet preventing the world war, and in the alternative hope of justifying Germany's position to England, whose friendship she still desires, I am formally authorized by the Foreign Office to make to the *Westminster Gazette* the following momentous declaration. . . ." The "declaration" is nothing but the repetition of the notorious and characteristic Prussian lie about German efforts to restrain Austria, a lie with which I have already dealt in these pages; but the "formal authorization" is interesting and significant.

When the war actually broke out the *Westminster Gazette* did not even show the *Daily News'* measure of hesitation. It became at once enthusiastically warlike. "We can do no other," it remarked, quoting the words of that great Teutonic teacher, who had, as we may presume, led it to a true knowledge of revealed religion. No doubt at that moment it could not. But it may, later on.

Add to these powerful newspaper proprietors the number of great financiers of German birth or family connections to whom I have alluded—the Chairman of one of our greatest English Banks was born a German; and another born German, who has actually a brother in Frankfort advising the Prussian Government, and another brother in New York patronizing and financing the anti-English campaign in that city, is virtual master of London's transit—and it will be obvious that there is plenty of influential backing available for a Pacifist campaign when the right moment comes. As to the lines upon which such a campaign might be developed, we have a significant hint from an incident which occurred in the quite early days of the war.

On September 10 this year the *Morning Post* published a circular which had been secretly sent out to those who were, as we may suppose, regarded as suitable recipients. It bore the following signatures: "J. Ramsay Macdonald," "Charles Trevelyan," "Norman Angell," and "E. D. Morel," who is described as "Hon. Sec. and Treasurer (*pro tem.*)."<sup>1</sup> It contained, of course, a great deal of irrelevant

verbiage, but we shall not be far wrong if we consider the third proposed object of the movement as the gravamen of the whole document. It ran as follows: "To aim at securing such terms that this war will not either through *the humiliation of the defeated nation*, or an artificial rearrangement of frontiers, merely become the starting-point for new national antagonisms and future wars." As to the means by which William II and his Prussian *entourage* were to be spared the "humiliation" which—though perhaps less painful than the fate of the inhabitants of Louvain—would yet gall their humane and sensitive souls, I may quote the following very significant passage—

"When the time is ripe for it, but not before the country is secure from danger, meetings will be organized and speakers provided. But the immediate need is, in our opinion, to prepare for the issue of books, pamphlets and leaflets dealing with the course of recent policy and suggesting the lines of action for the future. Measures are being taken to prepare these at once, and they will be ready for publication when the proper opportunity occurs. For this purpose we shall be glad of any subscription which you can spare, and would like to know if you are willing to support us in this

effort, in order that we may communicate with you as occasion arises."

I do not profess to know when the signatories of the precious document would, in the ordinary course of things, have considered the time "ripe" for the prosecution of their activities without personal risk. But I fancy that the premature exposure of the plot by the *Morning Post* led to the premature publication, a week later, of an official manifesto, to which were appended the same signatures with the additional name of Mr. Arthur Ponsonby, M.P.

A comparison between these two documents is very suggestive. We have seen that in the secret application for funds made, it may be presumed to wealthy men of Pro-German sympathies, prominence was given to the desirability of sparing the enemy "humiliation." From the public manifesto this passage, which is the key to the whole, is deleted, and we are left with nothing but platitudes about "democracy" and "nationality," the need of a permanent peace, the impropriety of transferring populations from one State to another against their will (this from the apologists of Prussia !), and the wickedness of what is called "secret

diplomacy." Some of the observations made are just, others are somewhat foolish and visionary, others may be regarded as sound or unsound, according to the precise meaning to be put upon their very vague and obscure phraseology. Had we had nothing but this public appeal by which to judge, we should account it a hasty excursion into international politics on the part of well-meaning amateurs who had not the knowledge and experience to understand them. But its real meaning, to which all this hazy idealism is only intended to lead up, is to be found in the suppressed clause which I have quoted from the *real* manifesto of the signatories—the manifesto on which they hoped to get their money.

Now I am not suggesting that the signatories themselves are likely ever to be in a position to do this country grave injury. I do not underrate their abilities. Mr. Macdonald is an astute political intriguer, who for years "led" the "Labour Party"—on more than one occasion into the enemy's camp. The gentleman who signs himself "Norman Angell"—a certain Mr. Lane, I believe—is certainly the ablest of Lord Northcliffe's journalistic pupils, and

has acquired a great reputation (in Carmelite Street) as an original thinker on the strength of a crude restatement without acknowledgement of some of the less well-founded conclusions of the late Richard Cobden. Mr. Morel has for years specialized in Anti-Belgian and Anti-French agitations, all of them more or less favourable to German interests. There is, therefore, nothing surprising in finding him “Hon. Sec. (*pro tem.*)” of an Anti-English agitation, now that England and Germany are at war. As for Messrs. Trevelyan and Ponsonby, their adhesion to the doctrines of the manifesto is probably more single-minded than that of their colleagues; and their names at least suffice to give those colleagues the *entrée* to the governing class. But the real danger, as I have said, lies in the power of the very wealthy men who may at any time be prepared to back these persons in their attempts, at a critical moment, to confuse the issue.

Of course, it may be said that Great Britain has bound herself to her allies not to make a separate peace, and that, therefore, the most strenuous efforts that the Pacifists may make in this country will in any case be nullified by

the determination of France and Russia to make an end for ever of the Prussian menace. That is perfectly true, but most of us would not be content to see England a passive and negligible factor in the settlement which is to follow this war. England, more than any of the Allies, more even than France or Belgium, is fighting for her life. England (with Scotland and Ireland) will be putting more and more men into the field so long as the war lasts, and will thus be in the advantageous position of being relatively stronger at its end than at its beginning. We wish the influence of England to be felt, and we wish it to be felt as a force making for the final and decisive overthrow of that enemy which is especially hers as well as Europe's.

Now, for myself, directly I saw from a comparison of their expurgated and unexpurgated manifestoes what line the Pacifists were likely to adopt as soon as they thought it prudent to take the field in earnest, I saw that there was only one way in which such tactics could effectively be met. It was no earthly good trying to meet the vague and declamatory aspirations after "peace" and "democracy"

with successive rebuttals. Moreover, some of these aspirations were in themselves reasonable and desirable, while an explanation of the obvious difficulties involved would be tedious, and, from the point of view of popular propaganda, altogether ineffective. It was not what these people publicly asked for that was objectionable or even dangerous: it was what they privately wanted. What that was, thanks to the *Morning Post* and its revelations, we were in a position to know. They wanted to save Prussia and its King from “humiliation.” It would be unreasonable to expect democrats like Mr. Macdonald to feel for the humiliation of any one below the rank of an Emperor. But I, with my thoughts fixed on the humiliation, the oppression, the mutilation and torture of a dozen free and gallant peoples, from the Poles to the Belgians, wanted Prussia not only humiliated but utterly wiped out. And the only way to assist in the accomplishment of such an end seemed to be to show the people of this country what Prussia was, and why her continued existence was an insult to God and Man.

That is what in this book I have tried to

accomplish. How far I have succeeded I know not, but at least if I have made my readers see Prussia at all as I see her they will have no difficulty in evading any diversions which her friends in this country and elsewhere may seek in her interests to create.

Scipio Africanus, we are told, was in the habit of concluding all his speeches, no matter what might be the subject of debate, with the remark : "And in my opinion Carthage should be destroyed"—followed, one may suppose, by a hasty resumption of his seat before the Speaker could call him to order. I recommend a similar policy whenever Mr. Morel, Mr. Lane and the rest may consider the time "ripe" for making a diversion in the interests of Prussia. We need not argue with them on the side-issues which they will try to thrust under our notice. We may accept much that they say—all that they say, if we choose. But we must in each case add Scipio's comment.

They may say : "Secret diplomacy is the enemy. Is it not deplorable that nations should be involved in a course of foreign policy to which they have never been asked to assent?" And we shall answer : "Most deplorable.

But at the moment we are not engaged in diplomacy but in war. And Prussia must be destroyed."

They may say : " Shall not every nation be consulted as to its own future destiny ? " And we shall answer : " Yes, every nation, except Prussia—which must be destroyed."

They may say : " Germany has her own contribution to make to the common civilization of Europe. Think of all that we owe to her ! Think of her quaint legends and kindly ceremonies ! Think of her music of Beethoven, the poetry of Schiller, the philosophy of Kant, the art of Albert Dürer ! Shall not these things endure to be a joy to countless generations yet to come ? " And we shall answer : " May they endure and have due honour for ever—after Prussia is destroyed."

And finally they may say : " After this dreadful war is over, shall there not be universal peace and goodwill among men for ever ? " And we, perceiving their thoughts, shall answer : " What hast thou to do with peace, O Apologist of Devils ? Get thee behind me ! Prussia must be destroyed ! "

Prussia is already judged by her peers, and

judged justly. On their conscience and honour they find her worthy of death. In the name of that very principle of nationality for which they are fighting, they pronounce one nation—if it be a nation—unfit to live.

It will be said—it has been said time and again by Pacifist writers and speakers—that their own hands are not clean. They are not. There is not one of them that has not done innumerable wicked things—the wickedest thing being, perhaps, the aid which each, at one time or another, has given to this universal enemy of European civilization and Christian morals. For that sin, each is paying in the agony of the present war, in the toll of her dead and the sorrow of her mourners. And it need not be denied that on the record of England, of France, of Russia, there are stains. Each has often and often chosen evil rather than good. But none, save Prussia, has ever said, “Evil, be thou my Good.” For the nation or the man who does that there remains only the terrible words which I have chosen as the title of this chapter. The repentant sinner may not have the right to judge other sinners; but he has a right to judge the warlock. And

Europe, with all her sins on her head, has a right to judge Prussia.

I have hinted that Prussia is hardly to be called a nation. It is rather an institution animated by a certain spirit, and a certain creed. In whatsoever things that spirit and creed may be inherent, a dynasty, an army, a political system, a caste—those things must, at the end of this war, cease to exist. From whatever federation or grouping of States it may be suitable to create in the Germanies, everything Prussian must be excluded. Prussian rulers must never again have access to the wealth of stolen provinces, like Silesia and Westphalia, on which to build great armies and fleets.

The Prussians must be hedged and confined within those cold deserts from which their Kings first set out on a career of outrage and loot. They must have no army, no fleet, no fortifications, no resources which would enable them to do further mischief to their neighbours or challenge again in arms the common morals of Christendom.

Nothing short of such a policy will really justify the vast sacrifices and awful perils of

this war. To leave Prussia merely defeated with the loss of this or that province, and the imposition of this or that indemnity, would be to ask her to take up her evil work again on the morrow. Prussia, for all her boasting, has been defeated before, but never before has Europe had the same full determination to make the defeat final and irrevocable. We cannot be content with merely weakening Prussia; we must take such steps as shall for ever prevent her from recovering her strength. Nor would the dethronement, or exile, or death of any one man even touch the problem. As I have already said: it is against no living men that we are really making war.

Among the dark and frightful legends of Satanism there is none more hideous than that of the Vampire. According to this strange tradition or fancy a human being could, by compact with the Powers of Darkness, purchase a horrible terrestrial immortality by draining secretly the blood of his fellow-creatures. No ordinary weapon could kill such a being; he was immune from rope and sword, fire and water. The lost soul could only be driven from the body to the Hell prepared for it by

means of ceremonies almost as ghastly as the terrors which they sought to exorcise.

Those who have tried to follow the story of Europe since the middle of the eighteenth century can almost see such a being moving across its darkened face. The foul spirit seems to take human form, now in one man, now in another. These men die, but the spirit is not laid. Continually it reappears, thirsty for the horrible wine that runs in the veins of men, sucking the life of nations, leaving in its track broken and bloodless corpses where had been happy races and free families. It is doomed to death many times, and great armies with sword and cannon are brought against it, and they win or lose, and go to their homes; but it does not die.

When the victorious Allies meet at last at the cross-roads of Europe, they will find many huge and difficult tasks concerning the remaking of Christendom to test their strength and wisdom. But one task must come before all others: the driving of the dreadful stake through the vampire heart of Frederick the Second.

## CHAPTER VIII

### AFTER THE WAR

WE have not infrequently heard lately a certain expression about this war; it is a special favourite with newly converted Pacifists, who are naturally unwilling to confess that their past professions and ideals were wholly illusory. This, it is said, is a war to end war.

For myself, I do not think that a good description either of the object or of the probable results of the present tremendous contest. I do not think it is a war to end war: I think it might be more fitly described as a war to end a certain kind of peace—the peace of Prussia that passeth all abhorrence.

It is a curious symptom of the decay of clear thinking in this age of ours that people seem no longer able to distinguish between special and acute evils afflicting some particular unhappy society and the ordinary imperfections common to all human societies. We can still see the distinction—though even this Eugenists are busily trying to make us lose sight of—in

matters affecting bodily well-being. When a doctor tells us that if we follow a certain treatment we shall be well soon, we do not understand him to be promising a body immune henceforth from all physical ills, or even a state of ideally perfect health in the near future. We take him to mean merely that the particular thing that is specially the matter with us at the moment will no longer afflict us. But we have forgotten that the same thing holds good of the diseases of societies. Thus you will find men citing the fact that in all ages and nations there have always been inequalities of income as an argument for regarding the monstrous and insane distribution of wealth which we see around us to-day—a thing probably never paralleled in the world before, and certainly never except in the last stages of national decline—as a thing normal and unalterable by human wisdom; while, on the other hand, if you say that to make a happy and secure community it is desirable that virtually all families should own property, you will be challenged by Socialists and others to show that under such a system you could guarantee a permanent and mathematically equal division of material wealth—a thing which no nation has ever either

attained or desired. The same kind of people will think that if you defend the institution of marriage you are maintaining that all marriages are ideally happy. They will also tell you that "alcohol" is a poison, and deduce that ale ought to be treated like prussic acid.

There is just the same lack of the power to distinguish between the normal and the abnormal in much of the talk we hear about "Militarism." Defenders of the war—especially those who have a Pacifist past to explain away—say that we are fighting to put down "German Militarism." Whereupon the unconverted Pacifists retort that we have "Militarism" here, and that so have the French and the Russians. And then the repentant Pacifist perhaps says, "Yes; but our Militarism is not so bad as German Militarism." And then we have a discussion as to whether Russian Militarism is not worse than German Militarism. And, meanwhile, no one thinks of asking what exact meaning is to be attached to the word Militarism. Still less does any one find it necessary to state clearly what there was abnormal about the armed force of Prussia, and why Europe will be in a happier and healthier condition when it is shattered for ever.

When Prussia set out to deny the existence of any common conscience of Europe which had authority over all European nations, to deny that treaties and contracts were binding on any Power that felt strong enough to break them, to deny the rights of nationality, to deny honour, to deny reciprocity of obligation between States and individuals, in a word, to deny all those principles upon which the comity of Europe is founded; and when she proposed to back these denials with an immense armament created for the purpose, the most honourable and courageous thing for the European nations to have done would have been to have attacked her in defence of the institutions she insulted and threatened. They did not do this for reasons which I have attempted partly to analyse in this book. They preferred a less heroic policy, which was nevertheless the only policy that, after refusing to challenge instant battle, they could adopt—the policy of imitation.

All nations have always had armies of some kind to defend themselves against their neighbours, and support such claims as those neighbours might challenge. There is nothing abnormal in that; if it is an imperfection, it is

an imperfection incidental to the organization of men in nations, and can only be destroyed by destroying nations—an idea as unthinkable as it is odious. But there is something abnormal in the frantic piling up of armaments, the wild race to secure more men and more guns, which has gone on with ever-increasing speed for the last forty years. And that abnormality was the direct result of the presence in Europe of a Power which challenged the common morals of the comity of nations and armed in support of that challenge, yet which the other nations would not fight. From that unnatural condition directly proceeded a disease from which it is not unreasonable to hope that this war will relieve us.

Prussia had to arm because it was her theory that armed force was the only thing that counted, and because it was on the strength of her supremacy in arms that she challenged the conscience of the world. The other nations, since they did not choose to fight Prussia, had to arm because, if they did not do so, they knew that Prussia would instantly attack them. Hence Conscription answered Conscription and Dreadnought answered Dreadnought, and the whole energies of Europe were directed to a

single end—the creation of mightier and more costly engines of destruction.

I say that this was unnatural, and therefore bad. Armies are not unnatural. Wars are not unnatural. But it is unnatural that nations should be in a continual state of feverish preparation for a war that is continually delayed. Normally a nation ought to be either fighting or living at peace. A reasonable readiness for war ought, of course, to be common to all nations. But the Armed Peace, as it existed before the outbreak of this war, has, as I have said, an abnormal condition, which could never have come into being or been maintained but for the presence of something unwholesome in the constitution of Europe—the unwholesome thing being, of course, the military power of the great Atheist State.

I need hardly explain that I do not mean that the nations of Europe should have refused to take part in the competition which Prussia had started and steadily maintained. That would simply have been buttering themselves for Prussia to eat. I think that the more manly, and in the long run more prudent, course would have been to have accepted the Prussian challenge and fought when it was first offered.

Failing that, there was nothing for it but for all of us to be prepared for the issue which every sane man could see must come. For my own part, I have nothing to repent of in the matter : I always supported every proposal for the strengthening both of our military and of our naval forces. I have sometimes thought, however, that a word of repentance is due from some of those who now profess to recognize the indisputable fact of Prussian aggression, yet who a very little while ago were not only denouncing and ridiculing as “scaremongers” every one who drew attention to it, but in some cases—notably in their attacks on Mr. Blatchford, who deserves at this moment more credit for foresight than any living Englishman—accompanied their abuse and their sneers by the foulest innuendoes.

So long as Prussia existed, preparation for war was the first duty of every patriot throughout Europe. But if this war ends, as we must see that it does end, in the utter destruction of Prussian military power, one may fairly expect that the extravagant expenditure on huge armaments may be gradually reduced to what men of other and healthier ages have considered as normal. The sanctity of treaties will have been

vindicated. The power of Europe to defend its traditions by arms against any who disputed them will have been established. There will be a recognized code of international morals to which men and nations can appeal. And if any Power should in the future be tempted to follow the example of Prussia and defy that code, I think that, after the lesson they have had, the nations of Europe will hardly again wait more than a hundred-and-fifty years before vindicating it by the sword.

Much the same applies to the elaborate system of espionage which Prussia initiated and forced upon the whole of Europe. Of course, all nations have always used spies in time of war; and though the spy, if caught, was very properly shot, no disgrace attached to the practice. But the organization of an elaborate system of espionage in friendly countries in time of peace is one of Prussia's contributions to the decadence of European morals. Other nations have been forced, of course, to follow her example, though none of them have gone to the same lengths. The system of promiscuous payment for all information received, which makes every German, naturalized or unnaturalized, resident in a

foreign country a potential spy, is peculiar to the Prussian Government. One may reasonably hope that with the destruction of that Government it will cease to exist, and that in time of peace national hospitality will cease to be systematically abused.

This war will not end war. I know of only two ways of ending war. One is by endowing all men with perfect wisdom and unfailing virtue; the other is by depriving them of their manhood. The first is not within our power, and the chances of the second are happily disappearing with the prospects of a Prussian victory. There will be plenty more wars, no doubt; perhaps more than ever when the evil fear which underlay the Armed Peace is lifted from the heart of Europe. But it is fair enough to hope that these wars will be conducted under strict rules of honour, and that such things as the mere theft of territory from a weaker by a stronger State, as well as such military methods as have been employed in Belgium, will be forbidden by that common conscience of Christendom which our arms are now vindicating.

There remain to be considered the indirect results of a Prussian overthrow, and these,

though no man can foresee them exactly, cannot fail to be of enormous moment.

First among them I should place the discredit and disfavour which must more or less overtake all those experiments in imitation of the Prussian system which have been popular in so many nations of late years. For instance, when the Chancellor of the Exchequer introduced his celebrated Insurance Act, it came quite natural to him to say that his system had been adopted in Prussia; it was taken as a guarantee of wisdom and efficiency. Such a method of recommendation would hardly be so popular to-day. I have said in a previous chapter that the permanent impression left by the victories of 1870 was the conviction that it strengthened a State to treat the bulk of its citizens as slaves. The fall of Prussia can hardly fail to produce a reaction in favour of freedom, and that reaction will be strengthened by the knowledge of the informed that more than one Prussian failure has been really due to the superiority of troops not subjected to the Prussian sort of terrorism. The servile theory of society towards which so much of Europe (and this country in particular) has recently been tending will receive a set-back; and there will be a

corresponding revival of the belief that the best military valour is to be found among freemen who feel that they have leaders but no masters.

For the same reason I should not expect the democratic reaction of which I have spoken to take the Collectivist form. That form is almost as essentially Prussian as the tyranny against which it appears as a reaction. As a speculation it has no doubt often figured in the thought of Europe, but it was in North Germany that the movement of working-class discontent was first canalized in the direction of a demand for universal State ownership. In point of fact German Social Democracy is based upon the same principles as Prussian Imperialism. It accepts the same materialist basis; it founds its claims not, as the earlier French Socialist did, on an abstract theory of justice, but on a calculation of the material interests concerned, and on a supposed "necessity" produced by "economic forces." The Prussian Socialist, like the Prussian Imperialist, thinks of machines as controlling men, not as controlled by them. Like him, he regards his victory as "inevitable." Like him, he is indifferent to freedom, and unable to think of men as men or of families as families.

Finally, like his masters, he is beautifully conscious of his own superiority to the rest of the human race. I remember, in my Socialist days, attending a meeting of the International Socialist Congress at Amsterdam, and listening to a German Socialist who made a speech almost indistinguishable from one of the Kaiser's own. It was all about German Culture and the Teutonic Spirit leading the human race, only it was going to lead it towards government by Prussian Socialists instead of by Prussian Junkers. I shall always remember that speech by reason of a brilliant retort which it provoked from the late Jean Jaurès, whose subconscious Gallic patriotism it succeeded in jarring into life. The German had asked the world to look at the three million Socialist voters of the German Empire. "Yes," said Jaurès, "look at them! When there are three million Socialists in France, something will happen!" It was profoundly true. But Jaurès never, perhaps, realized that the reason why three million French Socialists would be formidable is the same as the reason why they do not exist.

If we leave aside our own excellent professional troops, freely enlisted and treated

respectfully and as free men by their officers, a victory of the Allies in this war, whether of French or Russians, Belgians or Serbians, is a victory of free peasants, men who own their own land, independent alike of landlord and public official. Such a victory, since success in war seems always to have the effect which I have noted in the Prussian case, is likely to increase the number of those who look to such a *régime* of free, land-owning families as the working model of the happy human society which we desire to see replacing the present unstable balance of anarchy and oppression.

For the same reason I should expect to see victory produce something like a reaction against much that we are accustomed to call civilization. I have called the Prussians barbarians, and spiritually speaking it is profoundly true that the Russian is a much more civilized man than the North German. But there is another sense in which the Prussians themselves use the word when they accuse us of "allying ourselves with Muscovite barbarism" against German Culture, and in which many Englishmen have been accustomed to use it; and, using it in that sense, barbarism

has done not a little to justify itself of late. The splendid military qualities revealed recently by the little Balkan nations and well maintained by Serbia in this war will lead many to ask whether the complexity of modern elaborations of life really makes a nation stronger (it is clear that it does not make it happier) than it was under simpler conditions. A victory for Prussia would be a defeat for civilization, in the sense that it would mean a defeat for all European ideas and for all that makes the intercourse of free and varied nations possible; but it would be a victory for civilization, if civilization means Krupp. On the other hand, defeat of Prussia by Russia would be victory for the view that it fares ill with the land where arms accumulate and men decay. It would be a victory for Man over the work of his hands.

I have spoken of Serbia, and I am not sure that, before the war is over, Serbia will not stand very high in honour among the nations. At present there is perceptible in this country a curious, and to my mind a somewhat ungracious, disposition to speak of Serbia as if she were in some way not quite respectable. Even Mr. George, in defending Serbia, finds

it necessary to say that her record is "not unspotted." Neither is Mr. George's if it comes to that. But Serbia's record is very heroic, which Mr. George's is not. All the Allies are fighting against tyranny, but Serbia's whole history is one long fight against tyranny.

By the geographical accident of her situation she has had in the present war to fight her own battle far away from her powerful allies, and she has fought it with splendid spirit, refusing to remain on the defensive, and pushing, whenever fortune favoured her, raids into the very heart of the mighty empire which had sought to crush her. I should not be surprised if, when the war is over, Serbia were to become a sort of exemplar for the many gallant little nations whom the overthrow of Prussia will enlarge.

There is a mordant contrast between the conduct and fortunes of the two small nationalities which have been involved in this war. Serbia was the terror of diplomats and a standing nuisance to all the chancelleries of Europe. Not only was she regrettably addicted to exhibiting her power of self-defence, but she displayed an even more perverse determination

to liberate by arms her fellow-countrymen oppressed by alien yoke. By her unrepentant pugnacity she kept all the statesmen in a continual fret over the security of their detestable and cowardly “Armed Peace.” In a word, she had thoroughly mastered the sound advice which Byron gave to the oppressed nations of South-Eastern Europe—

Trust not for freedom to the Franks,  
They have a King that buys and sells !  
In native swords and native ranks  
The only hope of courage dwells.

And the event has justified her. On the other hand, Belgium put herself in the hands of Europe, trusted for protection to the public faith of Europe, was resolutely pacific and strictly observed her neutrality. The result is that her territory has been violated, her fields ravaged, her cities burnt and sacked, her peaceful population massacred or driven into exile ! In her agony she has indeed shown a valour which shamed both the treacherous Power that attacked her and the timorous Europe that so long tolerated the existence of that Power. She will assuredly come out of the war, for all her terrible losses, a more formidable State than she was when she entered it, and, when she has

won back her soil and taken her share of vengeance on her enemies, it would be surprising if she consented again to hold her own by permission of any one but her heroic self.

And as I think this war will change our conception of civilization, so, I fancy, it will largely change our conception of democracy. We shall perhaps think of it less in terms of constitutional mechanism, and more in terms of the popular will and the actual response of the Government to it. We shall be less disposed to think we are being governed democratically, because the fellow, who, on account of his wealth or family connections or his known subservience, has been co-opted by a group of self-elected politicians to be one of their number, has to go through the farce of being chosen as the less objectionable of the two candidates submitted to the electors of Drabbleton-on-Ouse. When we have seen how obviously more democratic are the Russians under their Tsar than are the Germans under their Prussian ruling caste, we shall perhaps realize that democracy does not depend on electoral machinery, but that, on the contrary, the success of any machinery, electoral or otherwise, depends on democracy.

Russia is a permanent mystery to all the West, and I, who know nothing of that mystery save from hearsay and books, shall not attempt even dimly to forecast her future. This only I will say: that all the things that seem to have been really evil in Russia—her bureaucratic corruption, her espionage, her persecution of subject peoples—appear to have been Prussian exports supported continually by Prussian influence; while all the things that are evidently and splendidly good—her sense of fraternity, her intense religion, her charity and her stout courage—are native and spring from the soil. I am not sure that the change from St. Petersburg to Petrograd was not more important than any constitutional concession that the Tsar could have made. Once Russia is purely Russian we may live to see great changes, not perhaps in the direction of mere Western Parliamentarism (which has not been so conspicuous a success in its native home as to make the desirability of imitating it self-evident), but certainly in the direction of greater understanding, greater responsibility and more real representative relations between rulers and people.

In one respect at least the Russification of

Russia must almost certainly mean a victory for liberty and human right. To one martyred nation, bowed down under more than a hundred years of persecution, the bugle-note of this war is the trumpet of resurrection. The quotation from Bismarck which I have already given in another chapter shows that that astute intriguer saw that the Panslavist movement was favourable to Polish liberty, and threw all his energies into the work of opposing Polish liberty for that reason. But this war is the triumph of Panslavism, and therefore the defeat of Poland's enemies both within and without the Russian Empire.

There is another reason why, apart from any confidence in the Russian promise, practically all Poles feel this war as the end of their servitude. Frederick the Great was wise in his generation. The old Satanist knew his business when he invited his neighbours to that horrible sacrament of murder. A divided Poland had the hopeless task of fighting three great empires, if she would seek her independence. A united Poland under Russian hegemony would, if oppression were attempted, have, at worst, only one enemy to oppose, and would enjoy the good wishes and perhaps the

active support of the other European Powers, as well as of the considerable body of opinion in Russia itself.

There is another people to whom this war may bring the renewal of nationality, a people that has suffered a stranger destiny even than the Poles, and that has endured an even longer exile from the rights of nationhood. I mean the Jews. The resurrection of this nation is no less desirable in the interests of all European peoples than in their own. In particular the three principal Allies have suffered continually from the effects of the dispersion of this alien element throughout Europe. Whether they have persecuted the Jews, or tolerated the Jews, or submitted to the dictation of the Jews, they have equally found the omnipresence of this people an insoluble problem. But now, since the folly or treason of the "Young Turks" has thrown the Ottoman Empire into the melting-pot, an entirely unexpected opportunity arises of solving that problem. The difficulty has been that while the Jews could never be absorbed into the civilization of any European country, it was hardly consonant with justice to treat them as foreigners, since there was no foreign nation to which they could be

attached. Now, however, their ancient country of Palestine is available, and there is no reason why an independent Jewish State should not be established there, though Christians would naturally prefer that the Holy Places should be placed under international control. It would not be reasonable to expect that all Jews should return to Palestine, but once the Jewish State exists, with a Palestinian Ambassador in every capital and Palestinian Consuls in all the principal towns to support the interests of the dispersed Jews, it would be easy to treat them in every country as a foreign community with their proper privileges and their proper disqualifications. I think that the Tsar, who is evidently anxious to do all he can to make things tolerable for the Jews, but who at the same time rightly refuses to sacrifice his own people, might with especial propriety take a lead in this matter.

In France also we may look for a great change; a change already observable some years before the war, but one which the war can hardly fail to hasten. It is hardly thinkable that after one of those great spontaneous military efforts of theirs, in which their real soul is best and most fully expressed, the French

will ever again feel satisfied with the effete Parliamentarism that so constantly misrepresents them. Not that I should anticipate that Royalism will gain by the war; I should think that it would be almost annihilated by it. For my own part, I have always felt that if I were a Frenchman I could not possibly be a Royalist, if only because a Restoration would really write “Defeat” across the grandest of all the epics of French arms. That feeling must be stronger than ever to-day, for after all, however patriotic and courageous the young enthusiasts of the *Action française* may have shown themselves, the fact must remain that it is to the strains of the *Marseillaise* that the French soldier has charged the *féroces soldats* who have violated his fatherland, and that it is the Tricolour which he will at last have the glory of planting on the citadels of Metz and Strasburg. I should rather expect that the French would recover under the symbols of the Revolution those things which have continually proved consonant with their blood and civilization—the strong and popular central executive, the constant direct consultation of the people, and, above all, the deep conviction that soldiers represent them better than politicians.

One thing at least we may confidently expect —a final end to the sectarian policy dictated to the French Government by the Masonic Lodges. By one of those ironies of which all history is full, a law originally passed by the Masons as an insult to the Church has made such stupidities impossible in the future. No French Government is going to persecute priests who have faced Prussian bullets. Nor is any French Government likely to attempt to apply such petty tyranny to the Catholic population of the recovered provinces.

It will be interesting to see what effect the obliteration of Prussia will have upon Germany.

It may be that the little kingdoms and city states which for so many hundred years formed the political framework of the Germanies, and within the confines of which so much splendid art and music and literature was fostered, will reappear. Perhaps they will be joined in some sort of loose league, or in several such leagues. Or, again, we may see a new Federal German Empire. It is a matter for the Germans to decide according to their tastes, and their tastes not being in the main political they are likely enough to leave it to events to decide. The only condition on which Europe has to insist

is that Prussia should be entirely excluded from any such arrangement.

There is no reason for imposing upon the Hapsburgs the same veto which must certainly be imposed on the Hohenzollerns. The Hapsburgs must necessarily lose most of their Slav provinces, and probably their Italian ones also, but there is no reason why their German and Magyar dominions should not remain to them. Nay, if the Germans are looking for a titular head for a new German Confederation, they might do worse than consider the suitability of a Hapsburg primacy. Until they allowed themselves to be made the cat's-paw of Prussia the Hapsburgs had shown no little skill and tact in driving a varied team of kingdoms and parliaments, and might do so again. At any rate the Catholic kingdoms of South Germany, which have never loved the Prussians, might easily find themselves more comfortable and secure under Austrian leadership.

Of course, Alsace and Lorraine must be annexed to France, and Posen will form part of a united Poland, with the Tsar as its king. The fate of Schleswig-Holstein raises a question of peculiar interest to this country, for the Kiel Canal runs through these territories.

Among the many broken pledges of Prussia there is one that now possesses a certain interest —a pledge to take a plébiscite of the Schleswigers and Holsteiners as to their future. There is no reason why that plébiscite should not now be taken, or why any parts of these provinces that desired reunion with Denmark should not have their will. Our own interests clearly demand that in any case either the Kiel Canal must (its fortresses being dismantled) be placed wholly in the hands of a Power too small to be dangerous, or it must be destroyed. That, with the destruction or surrender of the German Fleet, and the recession of Heligoland, and with such indemnity as we may be able to enforce and such colonies as we may choose to take, should be our share in the fruits of victory.

As to the indirect effect of the war on England, I wish I could think that to us also it would bring really democratic government; but I rather doubt if it will do so. I think that a serious disaster would probably have forced Englishmen to wake up to the need of controlling their irresponsible rulers. But we have been spared disaster so far, and it is hardly likely that it will now overtake us. Our

governing class has had good luck, and has, on the whole, done better than we might have expected. It will be rather absurd, no doubt, after a great national effort, to go back to the ludicrous sham-fighting of the politicians, but I should not be candid if I said that I thought such foolishness impossible.

Two good things I should expect for England as a result of this war. One is an increasing resistance to the sort of oppressive legislation which our politicians have borrowed from Prussia—some particularly bad examples of which have appeared since the war broke out. The other is a certain insistence that the English governing class, if it is to govern, shall at least be English.

The problem has long been a serious one, but it has never before been brought home to the British public as it has been brought home of late. We have seen how our national action has been embarrassed, both before and since the outbreak of war, by the presence in positions of great political influence of men who were not of our blood and could not be expected to share our national feeling. But that brings up the whole question of government by secret payments, to which some of us have been

trying to direct public attention for years. If you give political power in return for a secret subscription to the Party Funds, you necessarily give that power not only to the English plutocrat, but to the foreigner and perhaps to the traitor. Mr. Carnegie, the eulogist of the Kaiser and the enemy of slaughter (except when inflicted on unarmed workmen at Pittsburg), is reputed to be a subscriber to these funds. He is an American manufacturer. I know of no reason why the Kaiser himself should not have subscribed. The Prime Minister tells us that he knows nothing about these subscriptions, and the Chief Whip, who alone apparently does know about them, might, for all I know, regard a foreign sovereign as an excellent catch. I admit that I do not think it very probable that the Kaiser contributed, but it is virtually certain that many Germans contributed, and we cannot tell how far the influence they acquired by so doing may have affected our policy up to the very point at which such influence would become open treason. It is certain, as I have said, that, even up to the moment of war, all the forces of cosmopolitan finance were ranged on the side of a dishonourable peace.

The strong resentment now felt against the

presence of alien enemies in high places can hardly fail to force the people of this country to pay to these evils more attention than they have paid in the past, and to insist that, if we are still to be governed by an oligarchy, it shall at least be a native oligarchy and not a foreign one.

On the whole, I think the truest thing to be said about the consequences of this war is that which has already been said by a friend, Mr. Ransome, that it will tend to make the nations which have taken part in it increasingly national. It will bring them nearer together in matters of contract and honour, because it will re-establish the common code which Prussia denied, and which other countries had half forgotten. But it will take them farther apart in matters of social custom and predilection, because each will have had, in the course of its fight for existence, to dig down to its own roots and rediscover its origins.

There used to be a thing called “Internationalism.” When I was a Socialist it was supposed (I never could imagine why) to be a part of Socialism. What it meant I never really discovered. It might, of course, mean something perfectly reasonable and even indisput-

able. Thus it might mean that what happened in one nation affected other nations. That is true; but instead of being a reason for expecting universal peace, it is obviously a reason for being prepared for and, if necessary, waging wars. Again, it might mean that nations have reciprocal rights and duties. That also is true, and it is a good reason why each nation should be ready to perform its duties; but it is also a good reason why each nation should be ready to defend its rights. It is further true that there are human sanctities common to all nations, and which alone render their intercourse possible; but it should be added that one of these universal sanctities is the right of a nation to fight.

What “Internationalism” seemed to mean in the mouths of most of its advocates was that a man’s temporal loyalty was due, not to the sovereign society of which he was a member, but to an abstraction called “The Human Race.” This entity must not be confused with the old and sound religious conception of your “duty towards your neighbour”—towards any individual man simply because he is a man. For that duty is defined and reciprocal, while one’s duty towards “humanity” was supposed

to be one of unconditional loyalty, overriding even the plain duty, based on reciprocity, which a man owes to the society to which he belongs. What this strange doctrine had to do with the doctrine which I once held, that the means of production ought to be controlled by the political officers of the State, I never could understand. As to what it is supposed to have to do with the doctrine which I still hold, that sovereignty in any State belongs of right to the people of that State, I am even more in the dark. But it is certain that for many years both Socialism and Democracy were mysteriously associated in men's minds with "Internationalism."

It is my hope that that association will not survive this war.

The war did not come unexpectedly—except perhaps at the actual moment of its outbreak. Its coming had been foreseen for years, and no one had talked about it more than the International Socialists. They had had years in which to prepare for the crisis which they all told us they foresaw—of course, as the inevitable result of "economic forces." If they had tried to hold the "proletarians of all lands" from fighting, and had failed, it might have

been said that the war came too soon for them, and that a little more "education of the democracy" would have done the trick. But as they themselves, who were presumably as thoroughly "educated" as man could be, were just as eager to offer their services to their respective national governments as were their supporters, we can only presume that their whole theory was based on an illusion.

It is, of course, true that the French and Belgian Socialists could legitimately plead that their nations were fighting in self-defence, while the German Socialists could plead that it was always pretty obvious that they never had done, and really never contemplated doing, anything against their Government. But I am not so much concerned with possible debating excuses as with the facts. When Gustav Hervé said that his loyalty was to some imaginary International Proletariat and not to France, I have not the shadow of a doubt that what he said was perfectly sincere. But would he now be prepared to say that it was true? When the crisis came, did he not discover that after all his loyalty *was* to France and to nothing else; that it was just because he was a Frenchman that the oppression of the French poor had moved

him to anger; and that it was just the same motive that made him ask the Government to send him to the front?

I invite those who feel with me that the liberation of the poor from the insupportable conditions of our time is the cause best worth fighting for, and that the only means to this end is Democracy—that is, Government by the General Will—to consider these things.

I really find it impossible to believe that they can again assemble in “International Socialist Congresses,” and pretend that what has happened has not happened, and that this astounding revelation of what it is that we really love and reverence, and feel to be worthy of the devotion of our lives, has not come upon us. Either they must be discouraged and feel disposed to abandon the struggle, or they must look for a new basis on which to act.

I invite them to take the latter course. I invite them to ask themselves whether there ever really was any connection between their championship of the poor and the denial of nationality, except the fact that their economic theory (with the soundness or unsoundness of which I am not here concerned) was invented by a Jew, who naturally saw no difference

between Europeans, just as we see no difference between Chinamen.

I ask them, on the other hand, to consider whether there is not a close and legitimate connection between the doctrine that the popular will ought to be sovereign in each State and the allegiance which men owe to such a State. I would remind them that during the French Revolution a “patriot” meant especially a revolutionist and a champion of popular rights.

Let them, therefore, go on championing the rights of the poor against the rich, of the populace against the governing classes; but let them do so each for his own people, and on a basis of Nationalism. Then, perhaps, they will find the populace listen as they have never listened heretofore.

As to myself, I never did believe in “The International,” even when I was a Socialist and continually heard the word repeated as a sort of solemn incantation; and I am not likely to accept it now that its professions have faded at the first touch of reality.







